# BEAUTIFUL BIBLE STORIES

PRESENTED
TO:
BY:

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA VISITING SOLOMON

THE BRINGING UP OF THE ARK

CHRIST BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN

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# BEAUTIFUL
# BIBLE STORIES

CONTAINING

## CAPTIVATING NARRATIVES

OF THE

MOST STRIKING SCENES AND EVENTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT;
LIVES OF THE PROPHETS, KINGS AND HEROES
OF THE BIBLE, ETC.

INCLUDING THE

## STORY OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES

DESIGNED TO PROMOTE

A GREATER INTEREST IN THE BIBLE AMONG PERSONS OF ALL AGES, ESPECIALLY THE YOUNG

BY

GRANDPA REUBEN PRESCOTT
THE WELL-KNOWN AUTHOR

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**Profusely Embellished with Superb Phototype and Wood Engravings**

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# PREFACE.

BRIGHT eyes and listening ears always greet the narration of the beautiful stories of the Bible to the young. To all such this volume is especially adapted, the narrative portions of the Bible being faithfully reproduced in language simple and captivating.

The work begins with the story of the Creation, tells all about Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and the tragic death of Abel. It describes the Flood, the Ark tossed on the world of waters and Noah sending forth the dove, and soon comes to the Tower of Babel and the Confusion of Tongues. The story of Abraham is fully related, together with that of the sacrifice of Isaac, the ram caught in the thicket, and the saving of the lad who comes into the romantic story of Rebekah. It describes Jacob and his beautiful dream, and tells of his troubles with Esau.

It narrates the history of Joseph and his brethren, and traces his wonderful career in Egypt. His sterling integrity is seen, his sudden rise to power, his shining virtues as a ruler, his deliverance of the people from famine, his tender regard for his brethren and affection for his father.

Was there ever a young person, or old person as to that matter, who was not charmed with the picture the Bible gives us of Moses in his little life-boat, his remarkable experience at the burning bush, his shining face as he comes down from stormy Sinai, and his stern reproof of Israel's sins and follies?

Then the waters of the Jordan divide, and the great leader, Joshua, and his host pass into the Land of Promise. In the history of the Judges we see Gideon and his marvellous fleece, and Jephtha making his rash vow. Samson slays the king of beasts, is overcome by a designing woman, grinds like a slave in the treadmill, carries off the gates of Gaza and shakes down the massive pillars of the Philistines' temple.

The story of young Samuel, who grew to be a prophet, recounts the glowing deeds of another Old Testament hero. He was a good child from infancy, and having started right, he became a great and good man. His career shows that the teachings of wise parents are remembered, and mould the characters of the young. Then we have the delightful history of Ruth, the gleaner in the fields of Boaz, who met with such good fortune and was rewarded for honest industry.

Very interesting to the young people are the Bible stories about the old Hebrew kings and prophets. They tell all about that wonderful man King Saul, who was so jealous of David that he threw the javelin at him and tried to kill him. Next we hear about the exploits of David, the ruddy shepherd boy, whose marvellous sling carried swift death to the boastful giant, Goliath. Then comes Solomon in all his glory, who built that most famous of all edifices, the renowned Temple at Jerusalem.

Then, with the swiftness of the whirlwind, the Prophet Elijah appears. The young people behold one of the most striking figures in history. They follow this mysterious prophet to the brook Cherith, and the poor widow's home at Sarepta, and behold the chariot of flame which bears him through the open heaven beyond mortal sight. They see the sweet face of the little Jewish captive in Syria, who sent Naaman to the prophet Elisha that he might be healed of his leprosy. This wonderful part of the history of God's chosen people sounds fresh and new from the pages of this delightful and very instructive volume. There are also many tragic stories connected with the later kings among the Hebrews. These make a deep impression upon the youthful heart, and teach the most important lessons.

The Babe of Bethlehem now appears upon the scene, and his captivating story is no less interesting than the incidents and events already related. We hear the angels singing; we see the adoring shepherds; we are present at the visit of the wise men; and we step into the Temple where Jesus disputes with the Jewish doctors. We listen to his wonderful parables, behold his amazing miracles, his awe-inspiring Crucifixion and triumphant Ascension. The Story of the Apostles completes this most captivating volume, the beauty and charm of which are apparent on every page.

This is such a volume as all parents should put into the hands of their children. Youth is the forming period of the whole life; it is the wax in the mould, and impressions then made are not easily effaced. This delightful work renders the Bible a new book, full of the grandest thoughts, the most inspiring truths, the noblest examples, and those beautiful moral precepts which lie at the foundation of all success in life.

The question how to interest the young in the Bible is solved, for they find such attractions in this volume that they read it eagerly. It is not a work to be glanced at and then thrown aside; but it is a companion in the home, and is found to contain fresh charms every time it is perused.

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# THE CREATION

AND

# THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

ONCE there was no world such as we see now with its lakes and oceans, its mountains and valleys, its cities and villages, its men, women and children. The first words of the Bible are—"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" so we see that the earth we live on and the heaven, with the sun, the moon, and the millions of stars, were all created by God, who made also all the animals, from the smallest insect to the large lion and elephant, the birds which are so beautiful in their colors, and the fishes which live in the sea.

The history of the creation is given in the first book of the Bible, "Genesis," which means, in Greek, "the beginning." In this history we may read how God made the earth and sea, the sun and moon, and the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, who were placed in the garden of Eden, but who, disobeying the commands of God, and so bringing sin into the world, were punished by being driven out of the garden, and made to earn their bread by hard labor, their sorrow being made greater by the wickedness of their son Cain.

It was more than six thousand years ago that God created the earth, and at first it was without regular form; earth and water were mingled; nothing grew on the surface; there were no trees or flowers, and no living creatures. All was darkness; there was neither night nor day, neither summer nor winter; no firm land, no sea, no stars or moon, no sound to break the silence.

Then "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," and the power of God was felt. He can do all things that seem good to him, and he made light to appear. The fourth verse of the first chapter of Genesis says, "God saw the light that it was good." And what a change

it must have made! The sun and moon were not made at first, but there was a bright light which shone for a time, and then again came darkness, for God divided the light from the darkness, calling the light day, and the darkness night. And that great act of God's power marked the first of the six days of creation.

ADAM AND EVE IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

When that first night had passed away, and there was again light on the face of the earth, God made the "firmament," that is the heaven, the word meaning fixed and immovable, and divided the waters which were above, the moist clouds, from the waters which were below. So there was a sky above with the many forms and colors of passing clouds on the clear blue. What a wonderful change in the appearance of the world must have taken place! but as yet there were no living beings to see and admire, or to worship the Creator. Then night came again, and the work of the second day of creation was done.

But there was much more to be done before the work of creation was completed. There was now day and night, but there was no separation of land from water.

On the third day, the vapors and mists having been lifted up on high, the waters were collected together, and the great seas were formed, into which flowed rivers, rising from springs which joined their waters, and so made wide and flowing streams. As the waters were thus collected

together, the earth was left dry. Mountains and hills, the tops of which were almost hidden in the clouds, appeared, and rocks against which beat the great waves of the newly-created sea. But the hills and valleys were bare; no grass or flowering plants were there, no forests, none of the beautiful blossoms which now we see.

Then God completed the work he had begun. The same power which made the waves of the sea, which made the rivers flow through the valleys, and the earth to stand dry in the midst of the waters, bade grass to grow, flowers to bloom, sweet fruit to ripen, and lofty trees to cover the hills and make the valleys green. In three days the earth, which was at first dark and "without form and void," had been shone upon by a great light—the sky had been created, seas and rivers made, grass grown, herbs had appeared and cast seed upon the ground for new growths, and fruit, "whose seed was in itself"—stone fruit and fruit of the apple and orange kind—was there. What a change! and a change which God, who made it, saw "was good." And with that instance of Divine power and wisdom the third day's work was ended.

On the fourth day the sun and moon were created, "two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night." The stars, also, were made to give light upon the earth. If we read this story of the fourth day's work carefully, as we should do, we shall notice that these great lights were not only to give light to the earth, but to prepare it for a new creation. The light of the first day was divided from the darkness, and when night came there was no light; but now there was a lesser light of the moon and the stars to shine, so that the night was not quite dark.

And God showed that there were to be other uses for these greater and lesser lights, which there would not have been if he had not made living creatures on the earth. The lights in the heavens were to be "for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years;" that is, they were to be at all times signs of his power; their changes were to make seasons—spring, summer, autumn and winter—each to be a blessing; and the rising and setting of the sun, the changes of the moon and the return of the seasons would enable an account of time to be kept—were, as the Bible tells us, in the Book of Genesis, "for days and for years."

The fifth day was a very wonderful day. Sun and moon and stars had been made, the waters had been divided from the land, and on the

land were grass and trees and fruit. Now the time had come for the creation of animal life; fishes were in the rivers, and birds flew about in the air; great whales swam in the ocean, and God bade the numbers of all that were in the sea to increase, and "fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply on the earth." That was the fifth day's work, but as yet there were no animals on the land; the sea and the air were full of living creatures, some very large, and some very small, but the earth had none.

But on the next, the sixth day, God made animals to live on the dry land; all those large creatures which are so wonderful; the cattle which feed in the fields, and many small animals and insects described in the Bible as "everything that creepeth upon the earth."

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," and created Adam, more perfect than anything which had been made before, and having what none of the beasts of the fields or creeping things had—the gift of reason—for God "breathed into him the breath of life and he became a living soul." Man was fitted to rule over all that had been made, and God gave him power over all, and brought them to him; and he named the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air.

Although there were so many animals of every kind, Adam himself had no companion, but God completed the work, and made the first woman, Eve, to be a "helpmeet;" that is, a wife to be always with him, to love him, and be loved better than anything else in the world. Then God blessed them, and "saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good." What a world that must have been when the all-wise God could say it was "very good!" There was no sin, no pain, nothing but peace and happy creatures.

So ended the six days of creation; and then God, who had made such a beautiful world, rested on the next, the seventh day, and blessed it, and it has been blessed ever since, a day of rest and worship, when the weary find rest, and good men throughout the world praise and worship the God who made them and governs them by his wisdom, and good children raise their sweet voices in hymns of praise.

The place where man was made was named Eden, and in one part of it was a garden, a beautiful place where grew flowers and trees, which bore fruit fit for the food of man. Through the garden flowed a fine river, which divided into four branches, to each of which the Bible has given a name, one of which, Euphrates, is still borne by one of the

great rivers of Asia, so that, although the Garden of Eden is no more, we can very nearly say whereabouts it was. It was near the country afterwards occupied by the Assyrians, that great and warlike people, who fought against the Jews, and about whom we may read so much in the Bible.

God did not intend Adam and Eve to be idle, for he knows that work is necessary to happiness. He told Adam to work in the garden, to keep it in order, and to attend to the growth of the herbs and fruits that gave him food. There were in the garden two trees which were not like the others, and to which were given the names of the Tree of Life, and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. That Tree of Knowledge Adam and Eve were told not to touch. All the other trees in the garden were theirs, but that one alone they must not touch nor eat of, "lest ye die."

THE TEMPTATION IN THE GARDEN.

That must have seemed very terrible to Adam and Eve, although, perhaps, they did not quite know what death meant, for as yet there was nothing in the world but happy life, and the death of anything was unknown. But no doubt they knew that God would be very angry if they did not obey him, and that his anger would make them very unhappy. For a short time they were obedient and happy. Adam worked in the garden, and Eve helped him, and they enjoyed the sweet fruits for food.

Among the living things in the garden was a serpent, which, we are told in the Bible, was "more subtle (that is, cunning) than any beast of the field," and it was able to speak. None of the other animals which had been created could do that. But this serpent was really an evil spirit, the same which in other parts of Scripture is named Satan, and he was able to take the form of a serpent, and so to crawl near Eve and whisper to her. He asked her if she had really been told not to eat of the fruit of one tree, and when she replied that Adam and she would surely die if they did not obey the command not to eat of this one tree, the serpent told her that was not true, and that God had only told them not to eat because he knew that if they did they would be as wise as he was.

The woman believed the serpent; the tree was loaded with nice fruit, "it was pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise." She was not satisfied with being good, and wished to be as wise as God himself. She allowed Satan to persuade her, and tasted the fruit; and Adam, who saw what she had done, forgot the command he had received and the punishment which he had been told would follow disobedience, and he also ate of the forbidden fruit.

Directly they had eaten, they were changed creatures; no longer good, but feeling ashamed of themselves. They knew the Lord God was near, and for the first time they felt afraid to see him. They heard his voice calling, "Adam, where art thou?" Adam answered, "I was afraid, and hid myself." God knew that he had been disobeyed; and asked them if they had eaten of the tree he had told them not to touch.

Adam tried to excuse himself by saying that Eve gave him the fruit, and she could only say, ashamed and afraid as she was, that the serpent had tempted her. Then God laid a curse upon the serpent, and said there should be enmity between it and the woman, and between her children and the offspring of the serpent, but that, in the course of time, the serpent's head should be bruised, which means that Jesus Christ should come to conquer Satan, and save from him all those who believed in the Saviour. Adam and Eve were told that sorrow and pain would be theirs all the days of their life; that they must live by hard work; that they would die, and would return to the dust whence they came.

Adam and Eve were driven from the garden in which they had been placed, and at the entrance of Eden stood great angels with swords of fire, so that the wicked Adam and Eve could return no more. They had lost the

right to dwell in the beautiful garden, to eat the fruit and be happy and good; they had brought sin into the world, and, with sin, pain and shame.

How sorry they must have been that they had so displeased God, and listened to the wicked advice of the serpent, instead of obeying the commands which the Lord himself had given! They had not known what death was, but they were soon to know it in its most terrible form. They had seen the trees and flowers in the garden full of leaves and blossoms, but they had not seen them die; they had seen the animals which Adam had named full of life, but they had not seen them lying dead.

ADAM AND EVE DRIVEN FROM PARADISE.

We may read in the New Testament that "the first Adam brought death into the world," and it was the sin of Adam and Eve which did so. They must have worked hard to get food and clothing; they must have known what pain was, and must often have thought of the happy state in which they once were, and turned their eyes toward the garden of the Lord. But the angels were there with the flaming sword that turned every way.

And never again will man see the beautiful garden of Eden. But those who have faith in the Saviour will, after death, go to a heavenly Paradise, where they shall see God, and Christ whom he hath sent.

# THE MURDER OF ABEL.

ADAM and Eve had two sons; the eldest was named Cain, and his brother, Abel. As they grew up, Cain helped his father to dig the ground, and Abel kept sheep. Although Adam and Eve had offended God and had been driven from Paradise, they had not, we may suppose, forgotten him, and had trained up their sons to worship him. When Cain and Abel grew up they each made an offering to the Lord.

Cain brought fruits such as he had been taught to look after, and Abel brought lambs. No doubt Cain did not really worship God, and was not sincere in his offering, while Abel did love and fear God, and desired to please him; for the Lord would not accept the sacrifice which Cain made, but was pleased with the offering of Abel.

Cain was very angry when he saw this, and his face showed how angry he was. This was a proof that he was not in a fit state of mind to worship God properly, for we should be meek and gentle, if we may hope that God will hear our prayers or accept our praises. God saw how vexed and angry Cain was, and reasoned with him, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at thy door." But Cain would not listen to reason, even when the Lord spoke, but was angry with his brother because he had found more favor; and at last, giving way to his rage, struck him so that he fell dead at his feet.

That was the first death of a man that had been known in the world, and the first death was a murder; not a quiet death, such as good men meet, with prayer on their lips, and loving friends around, but a sudden, violent death, and the only one near to see the dying youth give up his breath was his own brother, who ought to have loved and taken care of him, but who, in a fit of anger, had struck the blow that killed him. It was all owing to a sudden outburst of passion. Cain did not control his violent temper, but gave way to it in a thoughtless moment and committed the greatest of all crimes. People who give way to wild outbursts of temper are sure to get into trouble, and do things that they regret in their calmer moments.

Cain, we dare say, was filled with horror when he saw his brother lying dead at his feet; but he was sullen, and, instead of asking forgiveness for what he had done, tried to hide the deed, even from the Lord,

who sees every thing and knows every thought. God spake, and how awful his voice must have sounded in Cain's ear! He said, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" Cain said, "I know not," and added to such a shocking falsehood the wicked question, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

He was partly his brother's keeper, for he was the elder, and no doubt Adam and Eve trusted him to protect with his greater strength the darling and gentle Abel. God, however, was not to be deceived, and replied: "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth."

THE MURDER OF ABEL.

God did not say that Cain should at once starve, that the earth should not give some fruit for his food, but that it should not yield "her strength," only give him a little fruit, so that he should never have much, but be always poor and a wanderer from place to place. Cain knew what a punishment this was; he had no hope to cheer him, nothing but the thought that for the rest of his life he should be homeless and wretched, and that he himself might meet as violent and sudden a death as his brother did. "My pun-

ishment," he said, " is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth."

And then he knew that he had lost the favor of God, that favor of which, perhaps, he had heard his father and mother speak when telling their children of the happy time when they were in Eden, and which he had himself felt when peacefully tilling the ground, and seeing how happy the world around him was. With tears, perhaps, he said: " And from thy face shall I be hid." His happy life had passed away, his peace of mind had been for ever lost by his great crime, and, worse than all, he would never again see the face of his Lord and Maker. But he need not have been afraid of being killed. None would kill him, for God set a mark upon him, that he might be known, and threatened vengeance on any who should slay him.

After Abel's death and Cain's banishment, Adam and Eve had another son, whom they named Seth. Eve hoped that he would grow up like the good Abel whom Cain had killed. She believed that this son was the gift of God, to take the place of the dear child she had lost, and said: " God hath appointed me another son instead of Abel," for neither Adam nor Eve forgot the Lord and his goodness, and they believed that he still watched over them as a Father, although they had sinned so greatly.

When Seth had lived many years he had a son named Enos, and by that time, for Seth was a hundred and five years old when Enos was born, there were, no doubt, many men and women in the world, for, perhaps, Adam had other sons and daughters; and we read in the Bible that about the time of the birth of Enos, men began to call upon the name of the Lord.

Adam himself lived to the great age of nine hundred and thirty years, and, we may believe, told his children and grandchildren, and their children, too, how he and Eve had lived in Eden, but had been driven out, and warned them against giving way to sin, and forgetting God.

Cain wandered into the land of Nod, to the east of the place where he had lived before the murder, and in the course of time—for men lived to a great age in the early days of the world—others came there, most likely the children of Seth, and Cain took a wife, and had a son whom he called Enoch, and built a city which he named after him.

Cain had many grandchildren and great-grandchildren: among them Jubal, who invented music and musical instruments; Tubal Cain, who worked in metals, made tools of iron and brass; and Jabal, who gathered together flocks and herds, led, perhaps, a wandering life, and, as the Bible

expresses it, "was the father of all such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle."

We have just said that men then lived to a very great age, and the oldest man ever known was Methusaleh, who was the great-grandson of Enoch (not the son of Cain, but one of the descendants of Seth), and is said to have lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years. This Enoch was a good man, and the Bible says he "walked with God," and it is added "he was not; for God took him." This, we are told in the New Testament, meant that Enoch did not die as other men did, but was taken to Heaven while yet alive.

But the children and grandchildren of Enoch, it is to be feared, forgot what a good man he was, for by the time his great-grandson Noah had grown up "the wickedness of man was great on the earth."

"There were giants on the earth in those days," strong men who were "men of renown," that is, famous for their power and courage, but they were violent and wicked, had bad thoughts in their hearts, and forgot the Lord in whom their fathers had believed. God, we are told, repented that he had made man; all the people were so wicked he determined to destroy them, and not only them, but the animals that he had made, "man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air."

## NOAH AND THE FLOOD.

THERE was one man who still loved God, and was a just man. That was Noah, and the Lord willed to save him and his family, and for his sake to save also two of every kind of living thing. God had determined to send a great flood upon the earth, and he told Noah to make a large ark, or covered ship, which would hold all that he would save. Noah was taught how to build the ark. It was to be made of wood, there were to be rooms in it, and it was to be covered inside and outside with pitch.

It must have been a very large ship, for it had three stories, and a window and a door in the side. It was the first ship that had ever been made, for the people in those days had, perhaps, scarcely seen the sea, or if they had seen it, would have been afraid, strong and bold as they were, to venture upon it, for they did not know how to build a boat to float safely, much more a ship large enough to hold a great number of persons.

They must have wondered what Noah and his sons were making, and, perhaps, laughed at him; for if he told them that a great flood was coming which should cover the earth and destroy all living things except such as God had chosen to save, they were so unbelieving and wicked, and had so forgotten what they might have been told of the power of God, that they would not think Noah was speaking the truth.

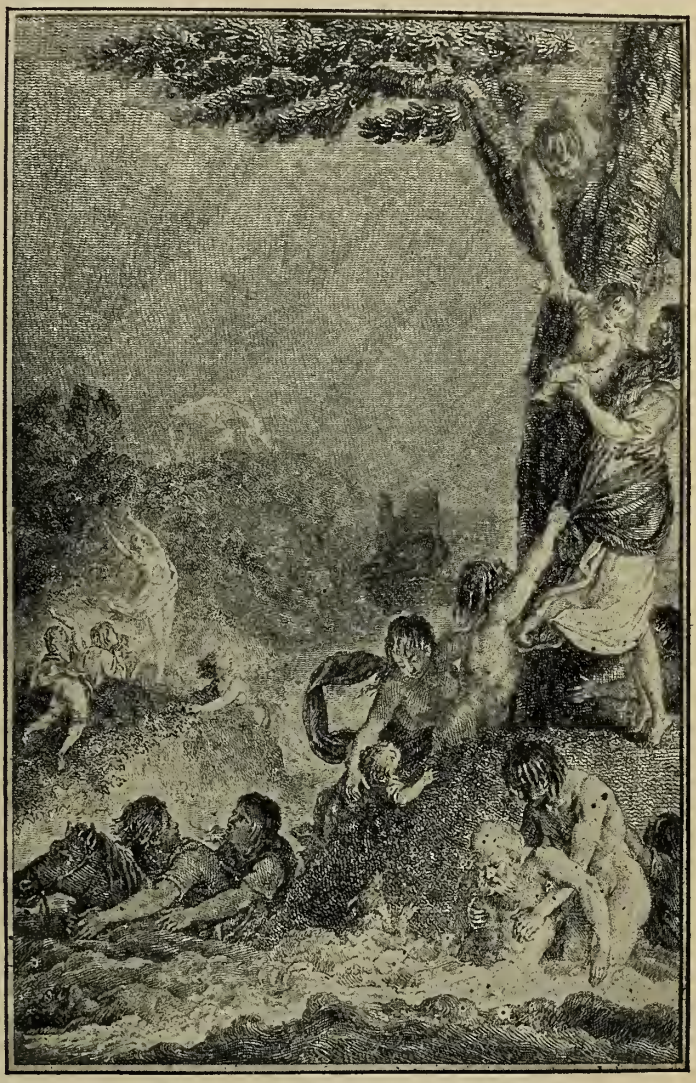
NOAH AND HIS FAMILY ENTERING THE ARK.

But Noah trusted in the Lord; he knew that he was faithful to his promise, and went on working until the great ship, or ark, grew into shape, and was finished: then, still obeying the command of God, Noah took a pair of every living thing, and enough food for them and himself and family, and when all was ready, he placed the beasts and birds and creeping things in the ark; and he and his wife, and his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives, went, too, into the ark, and waited for the flood which they knew the Lord would send.

He did send it. The Bible words are very striking, "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and the rain was upon the earth." You have, no doubt, seen heavy rain come down suddenly, pouring from the sky, and may have seen small streams quickly become like great rivers, as if all at once new springs of water had broken forth. If so, you will be able to under-

stand the force and meaning of the words of the Bible and realize the fearful nature of the flood which overwhelmed the earth.

But never since has there been such rain known as that which then fell upon the earth. Very heavy rain, even in the countries where there is most rain, seldom lasts above a few hours, and although we have wet seasons, some rain perhaps every day for a month or even more, yet the rain sometimes ceases, and sometimes comes down gently. But Noah saw from the ark the rain coming down like a great torrent for forty days and forty nights. It did not slacken or stop.



THE FLOOD DESTROYING THE EARTH.

At first the little streams and great rivers rose and covered the fields. Then the waters rose higher and higher, drowning the cattle and wild animals which fled into caves. Men and women, trembling with fright, and knowing now how great was the power of the Lord whom they had forgotten, and how truly Noah had spoken when he told them why the ark was built, climbed the hills for safety.

But still the waters rose higher and higher. The valleys became one great sea; the smaller hills were covered. People who were too weak to climb were swept away by the great rush of waters, and others sought safety on the lofty mountains. But the rain poured down the sides of the highest hills, and men and women were carried away to death by the force of the waters.

Then came the time when the mountain-tops were covered, and there was nothing but a great raging sea. The towns which the mighty men had built, all the work which they had done, were hidden beneath the waters; but the ark floated safely, for it was upheld by the power of the Lord, and in it was all that was left of the life which had been upon the earth.

NOAH OFFERING SACRIFICE.

For a hundred and fifty days the waters were at their height, but Noah and those with him were safe, and then the flood abated, and the ark rested on the mountain of Ararat. After forty days Noah let a raven fly, and then a dove, but the dove could find no resting-place and so came back, but after seven days more was sent out again and then brought an olive leaf in its mouth, so that Noah knew that the waters had abated.

After waiting seven days he let the dove fly again, and it did not come back. Noah then knew that there must be dry land, and, removing the covering of the ark, he looked out, and once again saw the earth. The Lord had sent a great wind which drove the waters back, and soon dried the land. Then he told Noah to leave the ark, with his wife and sons and their wives, and all the living things that were with him.

That is the wonderful story of the flood as told in the Bible; and not long ago a clever traveller dug up some records, engraved on baked

clay, from ruins where they had been hidden for thousands of years, which told nearly the same story. When Noah was once again on the earth he built an altar, and thanked God for his mercy, and God promised that the world should never again be destroyed by a flood, and that the rainbow in the clouds should be a witness of this promise forever.

The Lord said he would never again destroy every living thing, but that so long as the earth remained the seasons should come in regular order; there should be seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night. And we may see how he has kept his promise ever since. Every year the leaves come upon the trees at the same time, the grass grows, the corn ripens and is ready for reaping, winter and summer come every year, every day the sun gives us light, and every night darkness comes.

God never fails, but what he promises that he performs. Whenever we see the rainbow in the clouds—and we may very often see it after a heavy storm of rain—we should remember how once God destroyed the wicked people of the world, all but a few righteous men and their families, and how he preserved them because Noah believed in him, and did as he was commanded. Let us remember, too, that God promised Noah, and, through him, promised us, that he would not again destroy the world with a flood of water.

The great flood, the story of which we have just read, was sent several thousand years ago, but not a year has passed since without the bow, with all its beautiful colors, being seen in the clouds, to remind us of God's power and goodness.

God blessed Noah and his sons, and told them that he gave them power over beasts, birds and fishes—that "every moving thing that liveth" would be food for them. He commanded them, too, that they must take care of each other. Noah, no doubt, had told his children the shocking story of the murder of Abel by his brother Cain; and now the Lord again warned them against the sin of murder, saying, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man."

But even Noah, who had been so good before the flood, fell into sin afterwards. Like Adam, he kept a garden, and he also grew vines, from which he made wine, and foolishly and wickedly drank of it too freely, and committed the sin of drunkenness. His son Ham saw him in a helpless state in a drunken sleep, and made a mock of him; and for this Noah, when he awoke, cursed Ham and his son Canaan, who had,

perhaps, mocked him too, and, while he blessed Shem and Japheth, said the others should be the servants of their brethren.

Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood, and was nine hundred and fifty years old when he died. His three sons, Shem, Japheth and Ham, had many children, who spread abroad over the earth, and founded many nations in various places

# THE TOWER OF BABEL.

THE TOWER OF BABEL.

IT was about a hundred years after the flood, when men began to build the city and tower of Babel. They meant to make a very large place, and build a very high tower. I cannot be quite sure why they built them—the Bible does not exactly say. Some people think that the tower was built for the worship of the sun and the stars of heaven, as men had already begun again to turn from worshiping God only.

Others think that men built this big place so that they might all live together. But God had said that different families were to spread abroad, so that the earth might be full of people. Whatever their reason was, God was not pleased with them, and he would not let them go on with the building.

I will tell you how he stopped them. Up to this time every person in the world spoke the same language, so that they could all understand one another. Now, God made them speak in different tongues, so that they could not make out what the other said.

If you were to go to India you could not understand the talk of Hindu children, nor can they understand English, unless they have been taught it. So these people began to call the same thing by different names, and they could not possibly tell what a man wanted when he asked for it. Perhaps one would ask for a hammer, and his companion would bring him a brush; perhaps he would ask for mortar, and he would bring him a brick.

Of course they could not go on building the city, so they left off, and called it Babel, which means *confusion*. "Because the Lord did there *confound* the language of all the earth." They then separated into companies: those that spoke all alike kept together. They then went abroad to different parts of the earth, as God had before told them to do. Thus the very means they used to keep together were the means God took to scatter them abroad, and spread them over the earth.

## ABRAHAM AND LOT.

SHEM, the eldest son of Noah, was not one of those who were driven out of the land after the Tower of Babel had been built. He had children and grandchildren, and many years afterwards there was one of his race named Terah, who had three sons, named Abram, Nahor and Haran. Haran died young, and left one son, Lot, but the other brothers lived after their father's death. Abram married Sarai, and Nahor married Milcah.

Abram had no children and stayed with his father, Terah, who took him and his wife, and Lot, the grandson of Terah and nephew of Abram, away from the land of Ur, where they had lived so long, intending to go into the land of Canaan, which perhaps he had heard of as being a very fine and fruitful country, where their flocks and herds could find plenty of food; for in those days people did not live in houses and towns, but in tents, and moved about from place to place. But they did not get farther than Haran, which, perhaps, Terah named after his dead son, and there he stayed until he died.

But God wished Abram to live in Canaan, and told him to leave Haran; he did so, taking with him his wife Sarai, and his brother's son,

Lot, and his servants and all his riches. God promised him that from his family would spring a great nation, and that he should be a blessing to the world. God also promised that he would bless all that blessed Abram, and curse all that cursed him. Abram passed through the land as far as the Plain of Sichem and Moreh, and was told by the Lord that all that fair land should be his. God showed himself to Abram, who built an altar on the spot, and another on a mountain near Bethel, where he lived in a large tent.

ABRAHAM DEPARTING FROM HARAN.

But although Abram was rich, and had been promised that all the land should be his, he was not without trouble. The people of the country, the Canaanites, were fierce and bold, and there came a famine, so that Abram could not get enough food for himself and those who were with him. He knew that Egypt was a rich and fertile country, and he made up his mind to go there, and take with him his wife and family. He was not then so good a man as afterwards he was, but was timid, and forgot how right it is always to speak the exact truth, whatever may be the result. He feared that some of the Egyptians might wish to marry Sarai, who was very handsome, and might kill him; he told her, therefore, to say that she was his sister.

Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, saw Sarai and took her into his house,

and for her sake treated Abram, who he thought was her brother, very well. But the Lord was angry with Abram for telling a falsehood, and with Pharaoh for taking Sarai away, and he sent plagues upon the house of the king, who at length came to know the truth, and he was glad to give her back to Abram, at the same time blaming him for his deceit. He did not take any of Abram's wealth, cattle, silver and gold, but let him, and all that were with him, go. Abram and his wife, and Lot, with his servants and cattle, then went back to Bethel, where he had raised an altar, and prayed to the Lord, no doubt, to forgive him the sin of having told an untruth.

THE SEPARATION OF ABRAM AND LOT.

Lot was also rich, having flocks and herds, and many tents for his servants to live in. But he and Abram found that they could not dwell together, for, says the Bible, "The land was not able to bear them," which means that there was not food enough at that place for all their servants and cattle; and the men who took care of the flocks and herds quarrelled and fought among themselves. Abram was greatly pained at this strife, for he loved Lot, his brother's son, and told him they had better part, but Lot might stay there if he chose, and Abram would go away, or, if Lot would like better to go, he would remain.

Lot knew what a fine land there was to the east, in the valley of

the Jordan river, a land like a garden, and he told Abram he would go and live there. There were two cities there, on the border of a large lake, in the midst of this beautiful country, Sodom and Gomorrah, and near them Lot dwelt.

After Lot had gone away, the Lord told Abram that he would give him all the land, as far as he could see in every direction, for himself and for his children, for ever, and that his race should be so many that it would be as easy to count the grains of dust of the earth as to count them. Abram then removed his tent from Bethel, and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, in Hebron; and there, too, he set up an altar, and worshiped the God who had been so good to him.

Lot, no doubt, thought he had found a very good place to live in when he reached the cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah; but the people of those places were very wicked, and the kings of the two towns, and other kings near, were at war with the kings of Shinar, Elam, and other places; and, after long fighting, there was a great battle in a place known as the vale of Siddim, and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were beaten, and fled, falling into pits of slime, or pitch, and those of the soldiers who were left alive hid themselves among the mountains. The other kings, who had gained the battle, then took away the riches of the two towns, and many of the chief people, and among them Lot, with all his wealth and his servants, intending to make them slaves.

One of the men, however, escaped, and reached the place where Abram dwelt, and told him that Lot had been taken away, and was a captive Abram had many servants, all born in his house, and faithful to him, and he armed them and went in pursuit of the kings who had taken away his brother's son. He followed them as far as Hobah, which is near Damascus, and there he took from them Lot, with his people and his wealth, and guarded them back to Sodom, where he was met by the king of that place, and by the holy Melchizedek, king of Salem, who was, we are told in the Bible, "the priest of the most high God," and who blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand."

The king of Sodom wished Abram to take, as a reward, all the wealth he had brought back; but he refused, saying that he had vowed to God he would accept nothing for what he had done, so that the king might not be able to boast that he had made him rich; but he allowed the men who went with him to have a portion of the rewards the king had offered.

ISAAC WELCOMING REBEKAH

IACOB'S VISION OF THE ANGELS

But, with all his riches and power, Abram was not happy. He had no children, and he thought that when he died, his steward, or chief servant, Eliezer, would take his place. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, and reminded him how he had before taken care of him and given him all things that were good for him: "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." He promised him that he should have a son, and that his race should be as numerous as the stars in heaven, which no man could count.

God also told him that he should possess all the land; but that his descendants should be for four hundred years captives and servants in a strange land, but that they should return with great riches. To Abram himself, it was promised that he should live to a good old age, and die peacefully. Abram made a sacrifice to the Lord, and saw by strange signs that the vision he had had was real. The land which God promised to Abram and his children reached from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates, a vast country.

MELCHIZEDEK SETTING BREAD AND WINE BEFORE ABRAHAM AND LOT.

Abram was nearly a hundred years old when God repeated the promise he had made that he should be the father of a great nation. All Scripture names have particular meanings, and Abram is formed of two Hebrew words meaning "high father." God now told him to change his

name to Abraham, which means "father of a great multitude;" for, said God, "a father of many nations have I made thee." Sarai's name, too, was changed to Sarah, which means "mistress," a title of honor, God saying, "I will bless her and she shall be a mother of nations."

At first Abraham had not faith enough to believe the promise, for it seemed strange to him that Sarah and he should have any children now they were so old; but God repeated the promise, adding that a son should be born whose name should be Isaac; "he shall laugh," or "rejoice," showing the happiness he would bring to his parents. Perhaps some of you have read a pretty little poem in which a dear baby is spoken of as "a smile of God;" if so, you will understand how pleased Abraham and Sarah must have been to be told that they should have a son so named.

We shall see that the promise was exactly kept, and when we read the history of the Jewish people in the other books of the Old Testament, we shall see how great they were, how many kings they had, and that Abraham was indeed the father of a great nation; and, better still, in the New Testament we are told that the Lord Jesus Christ was of the race of Abraham, and that in him all the nations of the world are blessed.

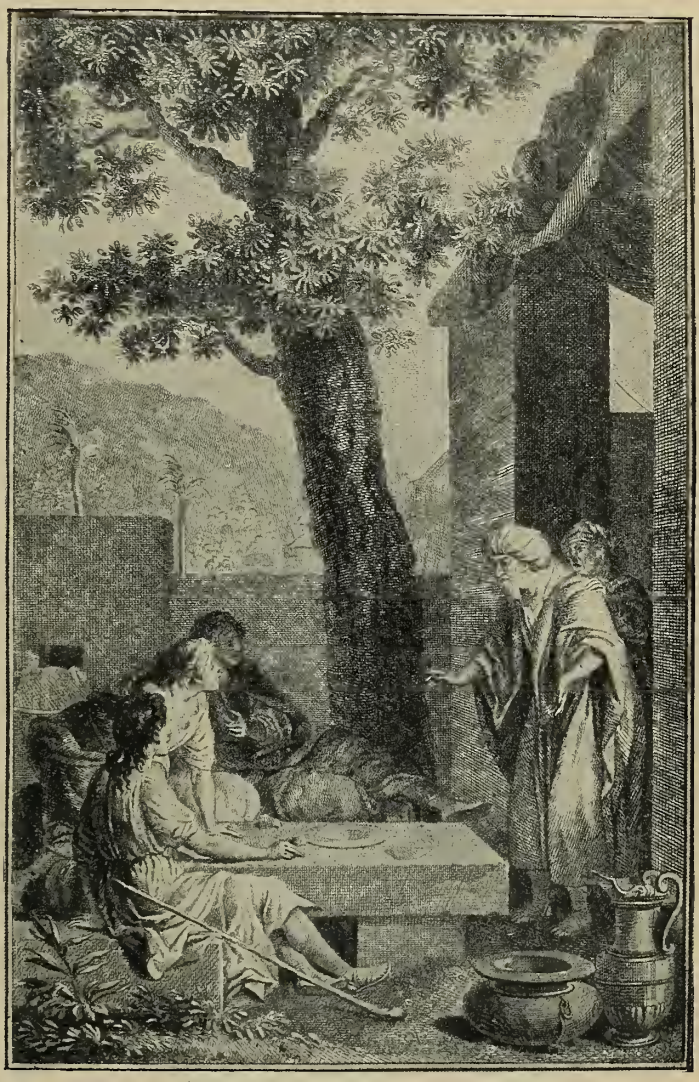
One fine summer day Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent, on the plain of Mamre, resting perhaps after labor, when he saw three men standing near him. In those times weary travellers could always make sure of having food and rest offered them when they reached a tent, and in that hot, dusty country washing the feet after a journey was very pleasant and refreshing. Water for that purpose was always offered as well as food; and Abraham, directly he saw the men, who he thought were tired and hungry travellers, went quickly to them, and, bowing low, asked them to rest in the shadow of the trees, eat some food which he would fetch, and wash their feet.

While they rested, Sarah busied herself making a cake, and Abraham had a young calf killed, so that he might offer a good meal to the strangers. When the cake and meat were ready, they were, with butter and milk, set before the strangers, who ate, while Abraham, as the custom was, waited upon his guests. Abraham was so kind and hospitable because in those times it was the practice to be so, and if travellers had not been welcomed in that way by those who dwelt in the land, they might have died from hunger and thirst; but he did not at first know that his guests were angels, and that the Lord himself was speaking through them.

When, however, they asked for Sarah, and the promise that she

should have a son was repeated, Abraham knew that he was in the presence of the Lord. Sarah did not know it, but when, hidden in the tent (for it was not the custom of Eastern women to show themselves much to strangers), she heard that before another year was over she should have a child, she laughed, but the Lord reproved her, and no doubt she was sorry afterwards that she had so very little faith.

When they left the tent the strangers told Abraham that they were going to Sodom, and he offered to lead them on the way. As they were journeying, the Lord said he had determined to destroy that city because of the terrible wickedness of the people. The two angels who were with God left Abraham and went towards Sodom, and then Abraham, whose nephew, Lot, with his family, was in the wicked city, pleaded with the Lord for the righteous men who might be there.



ABRAHAM ENTERTAINING THE THREE ANGELS.

"If," was the answer, "I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, I will spare all the place for their sake." Abraham still prayed for the good men who might be there, even if not so many as fifty, and received the promise that if only ten were there the city should be spared.

Abraham returned to his home, hoping, no doubt, that good men enough would be found in Sodom to save it; but he did not know how

very wicked the people were, for not even ten could be found; and the two angels who had gone to the house of Lot, took him and his wife and two daughters, and led them out of the city, telling them to go to a small town a short distance off, where they would be safe.

THE ANGELS WARNING LOT TO FLEE FROM SODOM.

Then brimstone and fire were rained out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah, which, with every living creature in them, were destroyed. Lot and his family were commanded not to look behind them when flying, but his wife disobeyed, and was immediately changed into a pillar of salt.

When, according to the promise, Isaac was born, his mother was full of joy, and said, referring to the name which had been given him, "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me." Isaac grew up a good child, and we may be sure was a great joy to his parents. So tenderly, indeed, does he seem to have been loved by his father, that the Lord made him a means of trying Abraham's faith and obedience. The old father was told to take his little son to a mountain in the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a sacrifice.

Abraham must have felt bitterly how hard it was to obey such a command, but he had faith in God, and knew that the Lord's will must be done. Early in the morning he took Isaac and two of his servants,

with wood for the burnt-offering, and an ass to help them bear it, or perhaps for the lad to ride on. For three days they travelled, the father very sad, and the boy, not knowing why they were going so long a distance, no doubt, enjoying the ride, and talking prettily and innocently about all the strange things he saw. At length they reached the mountain, and then Abraham bade his young men remain behind, while he and Isaac went to make the offering.

ABRAHAM OFFERING UP ISAAC.

It was natural that the boy should ask where was the lamb that was to be killed, and his father answered sadly, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." Perhaps he hoped that the Lord was only trying his obedience, but yet he knew that he must obey; and when they reached the place Abraham built the altar, and then, binding his boy on to it, took the knife and was about to kill him, when he heard his name called out of heaven. He answered, "Here am I;" and then what must have been his joy to hear the Lord say, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."

Amazed and thankful, Abraham looked round and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. He took it, unbound Isaac, and made

of the ram a burnt-offering to the Lord. In order that the place where the altar was built might be known afterwards, he named it Jehovah-jireh, "the mount of the Lord." Again the voice of God was heard, repeating the promise of the greatness of the people of which Abraham should be the father, as many as the stars in heaven and the sand which is upon the sea-shore, and that in them should all the nations of the earth be blessed.

ABRAHAM SENDING AWAY HAGAR AND ISHMAEL.

Abraham, we may be sure, went down from the mountain a happier man than when he started on his journey. His dear child was with him, not led as a victim to be offered up, but with a promise of life and happiness, and future greatness. After that Abraham dwelt at Beersheba, a place where, some time before, he had made a covenant, or treaty of peace, with Abimelech, a Philistine chief or king, with whom Abraham had had a dispute about a well. Beersheba means "the well of an oath," or the well where a solemn promise was made.

Abraham had another son whose mother was Hagar, a servant of Sarah, who made Abraham turn her and the child away. Hagar wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba, and then, being without food or water, she laid the boy down under a shrub, thinking he must die.

She went a short distance away, for she could not bear to see her

dear son die. While she was weeping the angel of the Lord spoke to her, showed her a well, from which she got water, and told her that her son should be the father of a great nation. No doubt Hagar, while living with Abraham, had learned to pray to God, and now found how ready he is to hear prayer. The name given to her son was Ishmael, which means "God hath heard." He grew up to be a great archer, and some of his children were famous men.

Abraham sojourned in Gerar. There his wife Sarah was taken from him by Abimelech. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, Behold! thou art but a dead man for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife. Abimelech was told that he had been restrained from sinning against God by taking the wife of Abraham and was commanded to restore her to her lawful husband.

ABIMELECH RESTORING SARAH TO ABRAHAM.

So he rose early in the morning and called all his servants and told them these things, and the men were sore afraid. Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and men servants, and women servants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife.

And Abimelech said, Behold! my land is before thee: dwell where it pleases thee. And unto Sarah he said: Behold! I have given thy

brother a thousand pieces of silver. Behold! he is to thee a covering to the eyes unto all that is with thee. Thus she was reproved and Abraham likewise for having called her his sister.

## ISAAC AND REBEKAH.

SARAH died at the place afterwards named Hebron, in Canaan. She was a hundred and twenty-seven years old, and having lived so long with Abraham, he greatly mourned her loss. He bought the field of Machpelah, in which was a cave, for a burying-place, and there he laid the body of Sarah. He was very old, and felt that death was near; the Lord had blessed him in all things, and he wished that his son Isaac might be as happy as he had been. He could not, from age, rule over his house, but he had a trusted servant, Eliezer, and he charged him not to choose a wife for his son from among the Canaanites where he then dwelt, but that he should go into his own country and there find a wife for Isaac.

ABRAHAM'S SERVANT AND REBEKAH AT THE WELL.

The wife chosen must come back with them, for, as the Lord had promised his son should inherit the land where they then were, he must not remain in another place. The servant obeyed, took ten

JACOB MOURNING THE LOSS OF JOSEPH

JACOB MEETING JOSEPH IN EGYPT

camels and went to Nahor, in Mesopotamia. When he reached that place, he made the camels kneel down outside the city, beside a well, to which the women of the place came to draw water.

The servant had been trained by his master to fear God, and asked to be directed in the choice he was to make. He prayed that if he asked one of the young women to give him drink from her pitcher, and she did so, and gave his camels drink also, that she might be the wife of Isaac. He had scarcely made the prayer before it was answered, for there came to the well a beautiful young girl, Rebekah, the granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor. She carried her pitcher on her shoulder in the Eastern manner, and went down to the well and filled it.

REBEKAH RECEIVING PRESENTS FROM ABRAHAM'S SERVANT.

The servant ran to her and asked her to let him drink from her pitcher. She let down her pitcher till it rested on her hand, and when he had drank from it, she saw that the camels were thirsty, and ran down to the well again, bringing up enough water for them all. The servant then gave her a golden ear-ring and golden bracelets of great value; and asked her name, and whether there was room in her father's house for him to lodge. When she told him her father's name, and that he was the son of

Abraham's brother and Milcah, the servant blessed God that his master had again known his mercy and truth, and that he, the servant, who had been trusted so much, had been led to the house of his master's relations.

Rebekah made haste home and told her mother what had happened at the well, and her brother, Laban, went out to Abraham's servant and invited him to come to the house, where room had been made for him, his men and camels. They were fed, but he would eat nothing until he had related the reason why he had come. He told them how his master, Abraham, had been blessed and had become powerful and rich, how he had been sent into that country to seek a wife for Isaac, and how the Lord God of his master had guided him in the way to meet with Rebekah, who was the child of Abraham's brother's son.

Bethuel, Rebekah's father, and Laban, her brother, saw that it was the Lord's will, and consented to let her go if she were willing. She said, "I will go," and the servant brought forth splended presents, raiment, and jewels of gold and silver, and gave them to her, making also handsome presents to her mother and brother. He and his men were well feasted, and in the morning he started to return to Abraham, and with him went Rebekah and her maidens, her relations blessing her as she went.

Isaac was walking in the fields in the evening when he saw in the distance the camels, with Rebekah and her attendants riding on them. She, too, had seen him, and asked the servant of Abraham who it was walking in the fields as if to meet them. When told that it was Isaac, whose wife she was to be, she got off the camel and covered her face with a veil.

The faithful servant told his young master where he had been, and that he had brought Rebekah to be a wife for him. Isaac, who had greatly mourned the loss of his mother, who had been dead about three years, received Rebekah tenderly, loved her, and took her to the tent which had been Sarah's, and made her his wife.

After the death of Sarah, Abraham had another wife, Keturah, and six other sons; but as they grew up he gave them presents and sent them away into the east country, so that they should not trouble Isaac, to whom he gave all his wealth. At the age of one hundred and seventy-five good old Abraham died, and was buried by the side of his wife Sarah in the cave of Machpelah. God had greatly blessed him in his lifetime, and he continued his blessing to Isaac, and made him prosperous.

# JACOB AND ESAU.

ISAAC and Rebekah were living very happily together, near Abraham's tents. But they had one great trouble—they had no child. They had been married a great many years, but no little children were making their home bright by merry play and happy voices; so Isaac prayed very earnestly to God about it.

And God answered his prayer. He said that Rebekah should have two sons, and that they should become afterwards—in many years—two nations; that one people should be stronger than the other people, and that the elder should serve the younger.

Not long after this two little baby-boys were born. They were twins—that means they were both born almost at the same time. The one who was just a very little the older was red and hairy, and they called his name Esau. The other, who was smooth and just like any other little baby, they called Jacob. But these names have a meaning. Esau means "hairy, or rough;" and Jacob means "a supplanter"—that is, one who displaces another, or steps into another's place. When the parents gave Jacob his name, they remembered that God had said the younger was to have the mastery over his elder brother.

When the lads were about fifteen years old, their good old grandfather Abraham died. All his life he had walked with God. He had led an upright, holy and prayerful life, believing in and loving God with all his heart; and he died at last in a good old age, being a hundred and seventy-five years old.

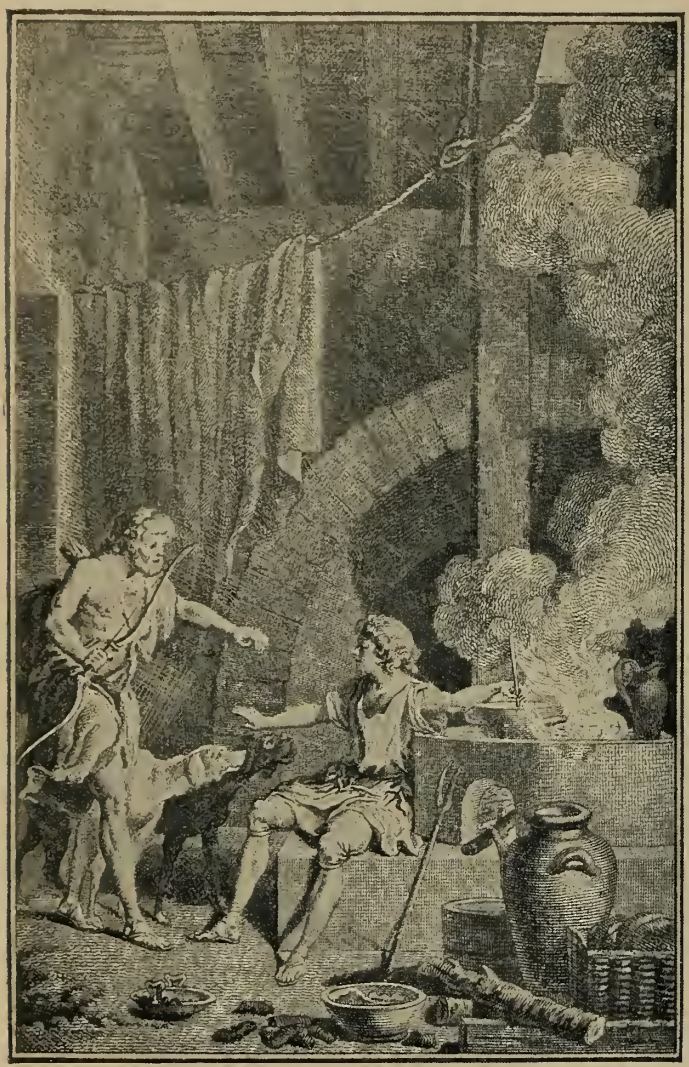
Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him. In the cave of Machpelah, which he had bought from Ephron, and where he had buried Sarah, his dear and faithful wife, there they reverently laid down the body of him who was called the Friend of God, and the "father of all them that believe."

And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac, his son. And Isaac and Rebekah took their two boys and went to live by Hagar's well.

So the lads grew up; and Esau became a clever and successful hunter. He used to go out into the fields with his bow and arrows, and shoot birds and wild beasts; and he used to shoot the wild deer and bring

it home, and have it roasted and made into savory meat for his father, Isaac. The flesh of deer is called venison; and Isaac liked venison very much.

Jacob did not care for hunting. He was a plain man, with simple tastes and simple habits; and he lived quietly in a tent, and took care of sheep and goats. Jacob loved God; and though, as we shall see, he was sometimes tempted to be sly, untruthful and selfish, yet God knew all that was in his heart, and he saw that he was humble-minded, and that he really did try to walk uprightly: so God loved him.



ESAU SELLING HIS BIRTHRIGHT FOR POTTAGE.

But God did not love Esau, for Esau was wicked, and had no wish to serve him. He did not care for God's promises, and he never tried to please him. Yet Esau was the favorite son of his good father, Isaac. Was it not strange? Can you guess the reason of this?

It was because of the venison which he brought; but this was a very bad reason for loving him best. Rebekah, however, loved her younger son the best. One day Esau had been out in the fields hunting, and he came back very tired, and quite faint for want of food. Now Jacob had just made some soup for himself of lentils, which are a small kind of bean; and when Esau saw it he longed for it, and said to Jacob, "Feed me, I pray you, with that red soup, or pottage, for I am faint."

And Jacob said, "If I give it to you, will you give up to me all your rights as the eldest son?"

And Esau answered, "Behold, I am at the point of death, and so my birthright will do me no good."

"Promise me then faithfully that you will give your birthright to me," Jacob said.

And Esau promised. So he sold his right as the elder for a basin of soup.

Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils. And he ate and drank, and then rose up and went away; thus he despised his birthright.

But God was displeased at what he had done. Esau, as eldest son, was his father's heir; and special blessings and privileges were to be the portion of the first-born. All the land of Canaan was promised to Abraham's children, and it would naturally come to be the inheritance of the first-born. But it would seem as if Esau did not care for blessings that were in the future and that he could not see; the reason, no doubt, being that he did not believe in them.

But Jacob had faith, and believed all God's promises. As his father Isaac was, of all Abraham's children, the one most blessed by God, so Jacob wished that God's special blessing should come on himself, and not on his elder brother. Yet he behaved very wrongly in the way he tried to get it; and God blessed him, not *because* of it, but *in spite* of it.

After this there was a famine in the land of Canaan. Do you know what a famine is? It is a scarcity of food; when men, women, and little children cannot get enough to eat. A famine is a terrible thing. People become so weak and ill from starvation that at last they lie down and die. Whenever there is a famine, hundreds and hundreds of people are killed by it; and think how dreadful a thing it must be to be starved to death!

So, because of the famine, Isaac left the place where he was living, and went a little further off to a place called Gerah, where the king of that country lived. And I think that when Isaac saw how scarce food was there, he must have intended to go down into Egypt; for the Lord appeared to him, and said, "Do not go down into Egypt. Dwell in this land, and I will be with you, and bless you; for to you, and to your children, I will give all these countries; and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in your family, because Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my commandments and my laws."

So Isaac stayed in Gerah. And he sowed corn in that land; and God prospered him as he had promised, and gave him a wonderful harvest. While his neighbors scarcely reaped at all, Isaac had an abundance of corn. And he went on prospering in all that he did, so that he became very great and rich; for he had large flocks of cattle and sheep, and a very great number of servants. And the people of that land were jealous, and envied him.

Then they began to show their angry feelings by doing spiteful things. They stopped up all the wells that Abraham's servants had made, and filled them with earth. This was doing much mischief, and a great unkindness, for now the cattle were in danger of dying of thirst. But Isaac's servants digged the wells again, and called them by the same names that Abraham had given them.

The men of Gerah, however, were always quarrelling with Isaac's men about the wells, and the king at last begged Isaac to go away. He said, "Depart from us; for you are much stronger and more prosperous than we are."

So Isaac took Rebekah his wife, and his two sons, Esau and Jacob, and went quite a way from there. He returned to Beer-sheba, which was the place where he was born, where he grew up, and where he lived so long near to his parents' tents.

When Esau was forty years old he did a thing which distressed his father and mother very much. He married two wives, and they were both women of Canaan.

How could he expect the blessing of God, when he took his companions from a people who were exceedingly wicked, and who were under God's curse? Ah! it showed only too plainly that he did not care for God's blessing upon his marriage, nor upon his home; and this was a sore trouble and a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.

Yet still Isaac loved his godless son the best, and wished to give him the best blessing—the blessing of the first-born. He wished to make him his heir—to leave to him all his riches, and to pass on to him all those glorious promises of spiritual blessings of which Esau was quite unworthy, and for which he did not care.

Some years passed away, and Isaac had become a very old man. He was a hundred and thirty-five years of age (at that time his sons were seventy-five years old), and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see. And he called Esau, his eldest son, and said to him,—"My son." And Esau answered, "Behold, here am I."

And Isaac said, "Behold now, I am old; I do not know how soon I may die. Now therefore take, I pray you, your weapons, your quiver" (a quiver is the case in which arrows are placed) "and your bow, and go out to the field, and get some venison for me; and make me the savory meat that I like so much, and bring it to me, that I may eat; then I shall bless you before I die."

And Esau went to the field to hunt for vension, and to bring it. But Rebekah heard what Isaac had said to his son Esau, and she began to think how she might get the best blessing for her own favorite—Jacob. She thought it could only be done by deceiving her husband, who was blind and old; and she was so anxious that the younger son should get the blessing intended for Esau, that she made up her mind to steal it for him if she could.

This was her plan. She said to Jacob, "Behold, I heard your father speak unto Esau your brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savory meat, that I may eat, and bless you before the Lord before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and do exactly what I tell you. Go to the flock, and look out two good kids of the goats; then bring them to me, and I will make savory meat for your father, such as he likes so much. And you shall take it to your father, that he may eat, and that he may bless you before his death."

And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: perhaps my father will feel me, and then he will find out that I was trying to deceive him; so I shall bring a curse upon myself, and not a blessing."

And his mother said, "Let the curse come upon me, my son; only obey my voice, and do as I have said."

Then Jacob went and brought two kids to his mother; and she made savory meat, as his father loved. And Rebekah took some beautiful garments which belonged to her eldest son, Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob, her younger son. And she covered his hands and his neck with the skins of the kids of the goats; so that his hands and his neck might feel hairy, like those of his brother Esau.

When all this was done, Rebekah put into Jacob's hand the savory meat and the bread which she had prepared

And he came to his father and said, "My father." And Isaac answered, "Here am I; who are you, my son?"

And Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your first-born. I have done as you bade me. Arise, I pray you, and eat of my venison, that you may bless me."

And Isaac said unto his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?"

Jacob replied, "Because the Lord your God brought it to me."

I wonder Jacob was not afraid to say this, and to use God's name when he was sinning against God, and against his poor old father, and Esau. And is it not sad to see how he went on telling one untruth after another? Poor old Isaac could not *see*, but he could *hear;* and he did not think it sounded like Esau's voice. He was not quite satisfied yet, so he said, "Come near, I pray you, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are indeed my very son Esau or not."

And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau"

And Isaac did not find out who it was, because his hands were hairy as his brother Esau's hands. But once more he asked him, "Are you my very son Esau?"

And again Jacob lied to his father, and said, "I am."

Then Isaac said, "Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless you."

And Jacob brought it to his father, and he did eat; and he brought him wine, and he drank. And his father Isaac said to him, "Come near now, and kiss me, my son."

And Jacob came near and kissed him. And he smelled the smell of his raiment (you remember, Jacob was wearing Esau's garments, and most likely they were perfumed, as was often the case in those countries), and he blessed him and said, "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed; therefore God give you of the dew of heaven, so that the earth may bring forth abundantly for you, and that you may have plenty of corn and wine. Let people serve you, and nations bow down to you; be lord over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. May God punish every one who injures you, and may he bless all those who do you good." This was the blessing.

But Isaac had forgotten that God had said, "The elder shall serve the younger." Though he was really blessing Jacob, he *thought* he was blessing Esau; and such words as these, "Be lord over your brothers, and

let your mother's sons bow down to you," should never have been spoken to Esau, for it was against God's will.

Well, it came to pass as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. And he also had made savory meat, and brought it unto his father; and he said unto him, "Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that your soul may bless me."

JACOB OBTAINING THE BLESSING FROM ISAAC.

And Isaac his father said to him, "Who are you?"

And he answered, "I am your son, your first-born, Esau."

Then Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, "Who? where is he who has hunted venison, and brought it to me, and I have eaten of all before you came, and have blessed him? yes, and he shall be blessed."

When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!"

And Isaac said, "Your brother came slily, and has taken away your blessing."

And Esau felt exceedingly angry with Jacob, and said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? for he has stepped into my place these two times:

he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he has taken away my blessing. But have you not kept a blessing for me?"

And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, "Behold, I have made him your lord, and all his brethren have I given him for servants; and with corn and wine have I supplied him: and what shall I do now unto you, my son?"

And Esau said unto his father, "Have you but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me, also, O my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

Then Isaac, his father, answered and said unto him, "Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. You shall have an abundance of the good things of this world, and you shall live by your sword, and shall serve your brother; but it shall come to pass that, when you shall have the power, you shall set yourself free from him again."

Some one had overheard what Esau said when he threatened to kill his brother, and had told Rebekah about it. She was greatly distressed, and sent at once to call Jacob, her younger son, and said to him,—

"Behold, your brother Esau is planning to kill you one day. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, go quickly and secretly to Laban my brother, who lives in Haran; and stay with him a short time till your brother's fury turn away; until your brother's anger turn away from you, and he forgets that which you have done to him: then I will send and fetch you home again. Why should I be deprived of you both in one day?"

Rebekah did not tell Isaac what Esau was going to do; perhaps she thought it would distress him too much. But she gave him another reason for wanting to send Jacob away to her own country. So she said to her husband,—

"I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Canaan. If Jacob should take a wife of the daughters of the land, as Esau has done, it will distress me all my life long."

Isaac felt that Rebekah was right in what she said, and that Jacob ought to be sent away to his own relations far off, that he might choose a wife from the family of Shem. So he called Jacob and blessed him, and gave him a solemn charge, or order, and said to him,—

"You shall not take a wife of the maidens of Canaan; but arise,

go to Haran, to the house of your mother's father, and take one of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother, to be your wife. And God Almighty bless you, and make you prosperous, and increase you, that you may be a multitude of people; and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your children also, that you may inherit the land which God gave to Abraham."

JACOB'S VISION OF THE ANGELS.

Then Isaac and Rebekah sent away Jacob; and he went out from Beersheba and took the way toward Haran.

So Jacob set out on his journey; and I have no doubt he felt very lonely and sad as he left his old home, where he had lived quietly and contentedly for so many years. He was no longer a young man, for he was seventy-five years old; and I dare say he thought it hard to be obliged to begin a new life all by himself. Ah! if he had not deceived his father, and cheated his brother, he would never have been sent away like this: it was the consequence of his own sin.

And now the day had come to an end. The sun had set and he could not sea his way any further that evening; so he determined to rest for the night in the place to which he had come. He took a stone, and arranged it for a pillow, and then he lay down to sleep. It was not a very pleasant bed, but he had a very sweet and wonderful dream there.

This was his dream. He saw a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending (that is, going up and down) on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, "I am the Lord God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac: the land on which you are lying I will give to you and to your children; and your family shall be as the dust of the earth for number, and shall spread every way—to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in you and in your children shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with you, and will keep you in all places where you are going, and will bring you again into this land; for I will not leave you until I have done that which I have spoken to you of."

When Jacob awoke out of his sleep, he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not!" And he was afraid. I think, when he felt the nearness of God to him, he then saw his own sinfulness, and how unworthy he was of so much loving-kindness and favor. He said, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil on the top of it. He had nothing else to give to God as a thank-offering, so he poured upon this stone the oil that he had brought for his journey. And he called the name of the place Beth-el, which means "The house of God."

It took Jacob a great many days to get to his journey's end, for it was about four hundred miles from Beer-sheba to Haran; but at last he came into the land of the people of the east.

And he looked, and behold there was a well in the field, and lo, three flocks of sheep were lying by it. This was the well to which all the cattle were brought for water, but just now a great stone was upon the well's mouth.

You remember, I have already explained to you that in those hot countries wells are very valuable, for there is often a great scarcity of water. Sometimes the wells are locked up or fastened, and are only opened once or twice a day, when all the flocks are gathered together; for it is necessary to be very careful that there should be no waste of water. Sometimes the wells are covered over with a large stone, or with boards, to keep the dust and sand from drifting in.

When Jacob saw the men waiting beside the well with their sheep, he said to them, "My brethren, where do you come from?"

To this question they answered, "We come from Haran."

Jacob must have felt very glad to hear this, for Haran was the very town to which he was going. Then he asked them, "Do you know Laban, whose grandfather was Nahor, Abraham's brother?"

"Yes," they replied, "we know him."

"Is he well?" Jacob asked.

And they said "He is well; and, behold, here is Rachel his daughter coming with the sheep."

And Jacob said, "It is not time that the cattle should be gathered together yet; why do you not give water to the sheep, and then go and feed them?"

And they answered, "We must not draw any water until all the flocks are gathered together, and till they roll the stone away from the well; then we may draw water for the sheep."

JACOB AT THE WELL OF HARAN.

While Jacob was talking with the men, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she kept them. And it came to pass when Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near and rolled away the stone from the well. Then he drew water for all Laban's flock. It was hard work to draw so much water; but Jacob was glad to do it for Rachel, to help her.

And Jacob kissed Rachel; and he lifted up his voice and wept. It was not that he was unhappy now—that was not why he wept; they were tears of thankfulness and gladness. He was thankful to God for bringing him safely on his journey, and guiding him to the right place; and he was so glad to see one of his relations again—for, you know, Rachel was his cousin.

And Jacob told Rachel that he was Rebekah's son, and that Laban was his uncle; and she ran and told her father.

And it came to pass when Laban heard that Jacob, his sister's son, had come, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all that had happened to him.

And Laban said, "Surely you are of our family and belong to us."

Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. And Rachel was very beautiful, and Jacob loved her very much; and he wanted her to be his wife, so that she might be his companion always. So he said to Laban, "I will be your servant for seven years, if you will give me Rachel, your younger daughter, to be my wife."

And Laban answered, "Yes, I will do as you wish; so stay with me."

And Jacob served Laban very faithfully and well for seven years; and it seemed to him only as a few days, because he loved her so much. And at the end of the seven years he said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for I have served out my full time."

Then Laban made a great feast—a marriage feast—and invited all his friends and neighbors to it. And the bride was covered with a long veil from her head to her feet, which quite hid her face from every one; and after the wedding she was taken to Jacob's tent. Then the veil was taken off, and behold, it was Leah to whom he had been married, and not to Rachel whom he loved.

Jacob was very angry at having been so cheated, and he went to Laban, and said, "What is this that you have done unto me? Did I not serve you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?"

And Laban said, "It is not the custom in our country that the younger should be married before the elder; but I will give Rachel also to be your wife, if you will be my servant for seven more years."

And now Jacob was beginning to think longingly of his old home in Canaan, and to wish to return there, and to see his parents once more. He had finished his term of service, and had been Laban's shepherd for fourteen years; and so, as soon as Joseph was born, Jacob said to Laban,—

"Send me away, that I may go to my own place, and to my country. Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served you and let me go; for you know how useful I have been to you."

But Laban did not want Jacob to go away. He found him such a faithful servant and son-in-law that he felt as if he could not spare him.

One day as Jacob was taking care of Laban's flocks, God spoke to him, and said, "Return unto the land of your fathers, and to your family, and I will be with you."

And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field where he was; and when they came he said to them, "I see your father is not as friendly to me as he used to be; but the God of my fathers has been with me. And you know that with all my power I have served your father; and your father has deceived me, and has changed my wages ten times; but God would not let him hurt me. For he has taken care of me, and it is he who has taken the cattle of your father and given them to me. If your father said, The speckled shall be your wages, then all the cattle that were born were speckled; and if he said, The striped cattle shall be your wages, then all that were born were striped." So this was God's doing.

Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels; and he carried away all the cattle that belonged to him, and all the goods which he had gotten in that country, to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.

He did not tell Laban he was going away, because he could not trust him. Laban at that time had gone to shear his sheep; and Rachel took the opportunity of going into her father's house and stealing some images or idols which belonged to her father. But Jacob did not know what she had done.

So he fled with his two wives and his children, and his men-servants and maid-servants, and his flocks and herds; and he passed over the river, and set his face to go toward Canaan.

Three days passed away before Laban knew that Jacob had gone; and when he found that he had taken his family and all his goods, he was

exceedingly angry. He missed his images too, and thought that Jacob had stolen them; so he took some men with him, and set out in great haste, and with very unkind, angry feelings in his heart, to overtake Jacob.

For six days Laban and his party journeyed on without coming up to him; but that night (the sixth night) God came to Laban in a dream, and said to him,—

LABAN OVERTAKING JACOB.

"Take care that you do not speak to Jacob either good or bad." God meant that Laban was not to try to persuade Jacob to go back to Haran, either by kind words or by threats.

Next day Laban went on with his journey again, and then at last he met Jacob, who had pitched his tents, and was resting his family and his flocks after their long journey. They had been travelling for six days, and this was the seventh day of rest. Laban was longing to say bitter words to Jacob, and to do him some unkindness; but he did not dare to disobey God.

After this, Jacob went on his journey again with a thankful heart, because God had saved him from Laban's anger, and had made them to part friends. And as he went on his way the angels of God met him. We do not know with what appearance they came, but Jacob knew they were the angels of God, and he said, "This is God's host" (or army).

How wonderful was God's love and kindness to Jacob! And how often he gave him fresh tokens of his unceasing care and watchfulness over him! By the angels that he had seen in his dream, ascending and descending upon the ladder, God had taught him that his angels were always about him. But now he was permitted to see them, not in a dream, but with his own eyes, face to face.

Is it not sweet to think that God and his angels are also with *us* continually? It is written in the Psalms, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." And the Lord Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

How careful it should make us, both in what we say and in what we do, when we remember that God's eye is ever upon us!

As Jacob journeyed on, he was now coming to a part of the country where his brother Esau lived; for Esau had gone away from Beer-sheba, and was not now living near his father Isaac's tents. And Jacob was afraid to meet his brother, for he did not know if he had forgiven him about the birthright, and the blessing, of which Jacob had robbed him. So he sent some men with a very humble message to his brother.

Jacob went amongst his cattle and put apart a great number of them as a present for Esau, his brother. There were two hundred and twenty goats, and two hundred and twenty sheep, thirty camels (each with its young one), forty cows and ten bulls, and thirty asses. All these animals he gave into the care of his servants, every drove by themselves; and he said to his servants, "Pass over before me, and put a space between drove and drove."

And he commanded the foremost (those that went in front) saying, "When Esau my brother meets you, and asks you, saying, Who is your master? and where are you going? and to whom do these cattle belong? then you shall say, They are your servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us."

And Jacob commanded the men that had care of the second and the third droves, and all that followed after them, to say the same words. And he said to them, "This is the way you shall speak unto Esau when you find him. And say, moreover, Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us."

For Jacob said, "I will make him feel kindly towards me because of the present that goes before me, and afterwards I will see his face; perhaps he will be friendly with me."

So the present went over before him; and he himself remained behind in that place that night. And in the night he rose up and took his two wives, and his two women-servants, and his eleven sons, and all that he had, and sent them over the brook for greater safety.

JACOB WRESTLING WITH THE ANGEL.

And Jacob was left alone. I think he must have stayed behind by himself that night that he might again pray to God with all his heart to be kept in safety, and that Esau might not hurt either his wives or his children. He had done all that he could think of to make his brother friendly to him; but he knew that unless God helped him all his own efforts would be useless.

And while he was there praying to God alone in the darkness, a man came to him and wrestled, or struggled, with him. He looked like a man, but it was an angel; yet not a created angel, but even the Angel of the Covenant, Jehovah Jesus himself, in the form of a man. Happy, blessed Jacob!

And the Angel wrestled with him until the dawning of the day. The struggle lasted a long time, but Jacob would not let go his hold. Then the Angel said to Jacob, "Let me go, for the day is breaking."

And Jacob said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

And the Angel said, "What is your name?"

And he answered, "Jacob."

And he said, "Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel" (that means "a prince of God"): "for as a prince you have power with God and with men, and have prevailed."

Then Jacob asked him, saying, "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name."

But the Angel said, "Why is it that you ask after my name?" And he blessed Jacob there.

And he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, so that he became lame; and Jacob was always lame after that to the day of his death. Do you think he was sorry and pitied himself for his lameness?

Oh no. He felt how much honor had been put upon him, and he was full of gratitude that his life had been preserved in that struggle. Jacob had now the constant memory, every day, of the wonderful love and condescension of him who came afterwards to our earth, to be our dear and blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Every day his lameness would remind him of that strange night when he wrestled with the angel Jehovah till the dawning of the day.

And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, or "The Face of God;" for he said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

When the sun had risen, Jacob went on again with his company. And he lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. Then Jacob quickly arranged his party, and divided the children to Leah, and to Rachel, and to the two maid-servants. And he put the servants and their children first; and Leah and her children after; and Rachel and Joseph last of all.

And Jacob passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. Esau forgot his anger, and ran to meet him; embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him.

When the twin-brothers saw each other again after twenty long years of absence, all unkindness was forgotten. Esau had left his home intending to fight with Jacob; but God had touched his heart, and now nothing but kind words passed between them. And Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and the children; and he said to Jacob,—

"Who are these with you?"

Jacob answered, "These are the children that God has graciously given to your servant."

Then the maid-servants came near, they and their children, and they

bowed themselves. And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed themselves; and after, came Joseph near, and Rachel, and they bowed themselves.

And Esau said, "What is the meaning of all those cattle that I met?"

MEETING OF JACOB AND ESAU.

Jacob answered and said, "They are a present to my lord."

And Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep all the cattle for yourself."

But Jacob said, "No, I pray you, if now I have found grace in your sight, then receive my present at my hand; for I have seen your face, and you have been pleased with me. Take, I pray you, my present that is brought to you; because God has been gracious to me, and because I have enough."

And Jacob urged him so much that Esau took it.

Then Esau said to his brother, "Let us now take our journey together, and I will go on first."

But Jacob answered, "My lord, you know that the children are very young, and that I have a great many little lambs and kids and calves; and if we were to drive them too fast, they would die. I pray you, my lord, to go on first before your servant; and I will follow softly after, according as the cattle and the children are able to bear, until I come unto my lord to Seir."

And Esau said, "Let me then leave some of my men with you, to protect you."

But Jacob did not need his brother's men of war to guard him. He knew that God had promised to take care of him, and that God's angels were about his path; so he said to Esau, "Indeed I do not need your men; only let me find grace in the sight of my lord."

So Esau went back to his own home at Seir, and Jacob journeyed quietly on, till he came to a place called Succoth. There he pitched his tents, and made booths, or sheds, for his cattle. But he did not stay long there, for he wanted to get back to the land of promise. So after resting for a little time, he went on again, till he came, in peace and safety, to the city called Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan.

MASSACRE OF THE SHECHEMITES.

It was not wise of Jacob to pitch his tents so near to one of the wicked cities of Canaan. We know what trouble it brought upon the family of just Lot when he went to live in Sodom, because some of his children learned the evil ways of the people of the city. And Jacob suffered, too, from the same cause. Jacob had a daughter whose name was Dinah; and she went out to see the daughters of the land – to visit them, and to make friends with them.

Dinah was led into wrong-doing by her godless companions and her new friends in Shechem. And when her brothers heard about it, they were so grieved and angry that two of them took their swords, and went into the city, and killed every man that was there; and they took all the women to be slaves. Then they took away all the sheep and oxen and asses that belonged to the people of Shechem, and they took away all the riches that they found in their houses.

Jacob was greatly grieved at what his proud and angry sons had done; and he was afraid, too, that the other people of the land would come and fight with him, because so many of their family were killed. But God kept him from this danger, yet he would not let him remain any longer in that place.

Then Jacob said unto his household, and to every one that was with him, "Put away all the strange gods that are among you. And wash yourselves, and change your garments; and let us arise, and go up to Beth-el. And I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and who was with me in the way that I went."

When Jacob had commanded his household to put away all their strange gods, they brought to him all their idols, and all the earrings that were in their ears that had on them the figures of the idols. And Jacob hid them. He buried them under an oak tree that was near the city, that they might never be found again.

Then Jacob took up his tents, and with all his family and all his cattle he journeyed on towards Beth-el. And God made all the people that were in the cities round about them to be in terror and afraid, so that they did not dare to pursue after the sons of Jacob. And in this way God kept his chosen people safely, till they arrived in peace at Beth-el.

# JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

OLD Jacob had many sons, but best of all he loved Joseph, whose mother was Rachel. Some of the elder sons acted wickedly and caused their father great sorrow, but Joseph was always obedient and good, and being much younger than the others, born when Jacob was growing old, and the son of Rachel, who had been always loved so dearly, he was anxiously watched over by his father, who, among other marks of love, gave him, when he was about seventeen years old, a handsome coat of many colors, in which no doubt he looked very gay.

This present made his brothers very angry; they were already jealous of him because he was clever, and because his father and mother were so proud of him, and, being spiteful, they never spoke kindly to him as brothers should do, but hated him, and made up their minds to do him some injury if they could.

Joseph had strange dreams, and as he was very open and truthful, and loved his brothers, although they were so unkind to him, he told them what he had dreamed, not thinking it would offend them or make them more jealous. Once he dreamed that they were all working together in the corn-field, as they often were, biuding up the sheaves at harvest-time. The sheaf that he bound stood up in the middle and those which his brothers bound stood round, aud the strange part of the dream was that their sheaves bowed to his.

When he told this dream, his brothers were very angry, and asked him if he really supposed that he would ever reign over them and they would bow to him. Joseph, perhaps, had no idea that the dream meant that, and was sorry that his brothers should think any the worse of him because he had told them. But they hated him even more when he told them another dream which he had shortly afterwards. In that dream it was not sheaves of wheat which bowed to his sheaf, but the sun, moon, and eleven stars seemed to be bowing to himself.

This dream seemed so strange and wonderful that he told it not only to his brothers, but to his father, Jacob, who was displeased, for he thought that the sun and moon might mean himself and Joseph's mother, and the eleven stars the brothers, for there were eleven besides Joseph, ten older, and one, little Benjamin, Rachel's baby.

No doubt Jacob supposed that the lad thought too much of himself, and that made him dream that he was a much greater person than any of the rest of the family; but he could not forget the dream—the Bible says he "observed the saying," that is, remembered it, and when Joseph came to be a very great man, as we shall see he did, his father, we can well believe, thought of the strange dream about the sun and moon and stars.

All the brothers were shepherds, for flocks of sheep and goats were a great part of their father's wealth, and they led the flocks to feed sometimes a long distance from home. Joseph did not always go with them, his father and mother, perhaps, not liking him to be long away from them; but one day, soon after Joseph had had the last dream, his father told him to go after his brothers, who had gone with the sheep to a place named Shechem, and bring him back word whether they were all well, and the sheep properly cared for.

Joseph went to Shechem, but he could not find his brothers, who, he was told, had gone farther away, to Dothan; there he saw them in the distance with the sheep, and hastened towards them. They saw him coming, and hating him so much as they did, they thought there was a chance of doing him some mischief, and as they were so far away from home, their father would not know of it. They had not forgotten or forgiven the dreams in which they had appeared to pay him such respect, and when they saw Joseph coming towards them, pleased to see them after searching for them so long, instead of welcoming him as a brother, some of them said, "Here comes this dreamer; let us kill him. We can put him into a pit, and tell our father that a wild beast has eaten him; then we shall have no more of his dreams."

The elder brother, Reuben, however, was not so wicked as the rest, and could not make up his mind to kill his young brother. It is sad to think that any of them should have wished to hurt so kind-hearted and good a youth as Joseph was, and their own brother, too; but jealousy makes people commit very great sins.

Reuben, perhaps, had not courage enough to take Joseph's part openly, but he thought that if he could get him away from his cruel brothers, he might be able to take him back, secretly but safely, to their father Jacob. "Do not let us kill him," he said, "but if we put him into the pit in the wilderness, he will never trouble us again, and we shall not have shed his blood."

The other brothers agreed to this, trying to make themselves believe that they should not be guilty of his death, if they did not actually kill him with blows, but only left him to starve in a deep pit, from which it did not seem possible he could escape. They took the advice of Reuben, and, having first taken off the handsome coat which Jacob had given Joseph, threw him into the deep pit, not heeding the cries for mercy of their poor young brother.

Hard-hearted, indeed, they must have been, for they sat down to eat near the pit where they had left Joseph to die. They little thought that their cruelty would be the means of Joseph becoming a great man and a ruler over many, to whom they would some day come to beg for bread; but so it was, and he who was left to starve in the pit, while they were eating, was saved by the power of God, to give them food.

In those days, as now, merchants in the Eastern lands used to make long journeys, with camels laden with precious articles, from one part of the country to another; and while the wicked brothers were resting, there came towards them a number of Ishmaelites, with camels bearing spices and other things of great value which they had bought in Gilead, and were taking to Egypt. Judah, the fourth of Jacob's sons, was greedy as well as cruel, and the sight of so much wealth made him think that, perhaps, the merchants wanted a slave, and if they would buy Joseph he would be as much out of his brothers' way as if he were dead; for if taken to Egypt, there would be little chance of his coming back, and the price given for him could be divided among his brethren.

He, therefore, spoke to the others, except Reuben, who had gone away, intending, perhaps, not to return until his brothers had left the place, when he could pull Joseph out of the pit and take him home, and they agreed to sell the lad, if the merchants would buy him.

The Ishmaelites, or Midianites, as they are also named, were willing to give twenty pieces of silver for Joseph, who was taken from the pit and given to them. His brothers did not care whether he would be treated well or ill. It might be that the merchants would beat him, for slaves have very often been beaten by cruel masters; perhaps his life would be made so wretched that he might almost wish he had been left to die in the pit. Cruel Judah and the others had no pity for him, nor for their father, who would feel such grief at the loss of his dear son.

When Reuben came back he found the pit empty, and gave way to

his sorrow, for perhaps he loved his young brother, and being the eldest, knew that his father would expect that he would take care of him. All Judah and the others thought of was how they could deceive Jacob. To do so, they killed a young goat and dipped Joseph's handsome coat in the blood. When they reached home, they showed the coat, torn and stained with blood, to their old father, and said, "This have we found; we know not whether it be thy son's coat or no." Jacob knew it well. It was the coat of many colors which his dear child had worn when, full of life and happiness, he had left home to follow his brothers.

JOSEPH SOLD BY HIS BRETHREN.

The blood, the rents, made him think that his son had indeed been set upon and killed by some wild beast, and that he should never see his darling again. For many days he gave himself up to his great grief; he had no desire to live, and, when those about him tried to comfort him, could only say, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." His sons dared not now tell him the truth, that no doubt Joseph was yet alive, and might escape from slavery and return; but they pretended to comfort him, while deceiving him.

The merchants reached Egypt, then a very great country, ruled over by a famous king, who bore the title of Pharaoh. They sold their

spices and the other valuable things with which their camels were loaded, and then they thought of selling the lad whom they had bought of the men who were keeping the sheep and goats near the pit in the wilderness. Rich men in Egypt kept slaves in their houses to wait upon them, and a master was soon found for Joseph, who was clever and had pleasing manners.

He was bought by Potiphar, one of the chief officers of Pharaoh, and captain of the guard, a rich and powerful man in the kingdom. He found how truthful and industrious Joseph was, and trusted him greatly, so that in a short time he made him his steward, or master over the other servants, and gave him the care of his house and riches. God had watched over and taken care of Joseph; had saved him from a cruel death, and had provided for him a new home, where were no envious and cruel brothers, but a kind master who loved and trusted him. And, for his sake, the Lord blessed the house of the Egyptian captain, and all that he had in the fields.

No doubt Joseph often thought of his father and of his little brother, whom he had left a motherless baby, for Rachel had died soon after the child was born, and perhaps he thought the day might come when he should again see them; but he knew that his duty now was to serve his master faithfully, and take care of the riches with which he was trusted. Doing his duty well, he was happy, and grew up a handsome young man, admired and beloved by all.

Potiphar had a wicked wife, who tried to make Joseph deceive his master, and because he would not, in her anger and spite, she made false charges against him, and told her husband that he had been acting wickedly. Potiphar believed his wife, and, thinking that the young man whom he had so greatly trusted had deceived him, he put him in the prison where those who had been guilty of great offences were punished.

It would almost have seemed now that Joseph was ruined; his master no longer trusted him, but had made him a prisoner; he, who a few days before had been so powerful in Potiphar's house, who had been looked up to by all the servants as the chief man in the place, next to Potiphar himself, was in a wretched prison, with no companions but those who had been guilty of great crimes, and some of whom were soon to meet a cruel death. But God did not desert Joseph even then. We may be sure the young man had not forgotten what he had learned in his father's tent, that the Lord watched over all who prayed to him, and trusted in him,

and that now, in his great trouble, he prayed earnestly to the God of his fathers, who had done so much for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The Bible tells us that "the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy," and that being so, no doubt the young prisoner was happier than he would have been if he had been Pharaoh himself. As he had at first found favor with Potiphar, so now he found a friend in the chief jailor of the prison, who gave him the charge of the others who were there, and trusted him with the care of the place himself, "looking not to anything that was under his hand." And here, again, as in the house of Potiphar, the blessing of the Lord made everything that Joseph did to prosper.

In the prison with Joseph were two of the servants of the king, the chief butler and the chief baker, who had been guilty of some offence which had made Pharaoh angry. They were put under Joseph's care, and soon looked upon him as a friend. One night both these prisoners dreamed, and in the morning they were very sad, for their dreams troubled them. They each thought they had been waiting on the king as they used to wait on him, and when they woke, we may suppose they felt bitterly how changed was their state, no longer happy men in a king's house, but poor prisoners in a dungeon.

Joseph, in his kind way, asked them the cause of their grief, and, remembering his own dreams, and the manner in which they had been explained, believed that the Lord would enable him to tell these poor men what their dreams meant. They were glad to find a friend, and told him all. The chief butler had dreamed that he saw a vine with three branches, and buds and blossoms which became rich clusters of grapes, which he pressed into the cup of the king, who took it into his hand.

The chief baker had dreamed that he bore on his head three baskets, and the top one had baked meats which he intended for the king, but birds came and ate them out of the baskets. By the power God had given him, Joseph knew what these dreams meant, and he told the chief butler that the three branches meant three days, and that within that time he would be taken out of prison and restored to his place in Pharaoh's house. "And," said Joseph, "think of me when it shall be well with thee." He told the baker that the three dishes meant three days, and within three days he would be hanged, and birds would eat his flesh.

Joseph was right in his explanation of the dreams; for three days afterwards—the exact time he had mentioned—was Pharaoh's birthday, and

he gave a feast to all his servants. The chief butler and the chief baker were allowed to be among them, and then they knew, the one to his joy, the other to his sorrow, how truly Joseph had told them what was the meaning of their dreams. The king gave the chief butler his place again, and he stood by his side and filled his cup while he feasted, but the chief baker was not forgiven, but was hanged as Joseph had said he would be.

Perhaps Joseph now thought he had made a good friend at court; that the butler, once more a favorite of the king's, would tell him about the young man who had been unjustly punished, and ask Pharaoh to release him from prison. But the butler forgot his friend who had been so kind to him for two years, and no doubt would have forgotten him altogether but for a remarkable dream which the king had. He thought he was standing by the river—the great river Nile which flows through Egypt, and there came out of it seven fat cows—they are described in the Bible as "kine," a name for cows seldom used now—which fed in a meadow.

Presently seven very thin, hungry-looking cows also came out of the river, and ate the fat cows. This was a strange dream, and Pharaoh was much troubled to know what it could mean, for he had a strong belief that such a dream must be intended to teach him something.

His uneasiness was made greater by another dream which he had afterwards, in which he saw seven good and full ears of corn, and seven thin ears, blighted by the east wind. Just as the lean cows had eaten the fat cows, so the thin ears of corn seemed to devour the full and ripe ears. Pharaoh was greatly distressed; in each dream there was the number seven, and in each dream the thin and poor things destroyed and devoured those which were fairer and richer.

There were in Egypt, as there are in many countries, a number of men who thought themselves very learned, and who, by their knowledge, were able to do things that appeared wonderful and above the common power of men. These magicians, as they were called, said they could explain secret things, and most of the people, the king as much as the rest, believed in their power. In the morning after the night in which Pharaoh had had two such strange and troubling dreams, he sent for these "wise men," and, telling them what had occurred, desired them to explain the meaning.

But they could not; they were obliged to say they did not know what the cows and the ears of corn meant, and the king was only the

more troubled when he found that none of the wise men of his kingdom could help him to understand his dreams.

The chief butler, who had so long forgotten Joseph, then remembered how his own dream and that of his fellow-servant had been explained. He knew that, although the magicians had failed, the young Hebrew in the prison would be able to tell the king what the dreams meant; and, perhaps, wishing to gain favor with Pharaoh quite as much as to serve Joseph, he told him of what had happened in the prison and what a wonderful young man was the Hebrew who was there acting as a servant to the captain of the guard.

JOSEPH INTERPRETING PHARAOH'S DREAMS.

Pharaoh directly sent to the prison, and ordered the jailer to bring Joseph to the palace. The prison dress was changed for better clothes, so that he might be fitter to appear before so great a king, and then he was taken to Pharaoh, who asked him if it was true he could tell him what the two strange dreams meant. Joseph answered modestly that he had not the power in himself, but that God would, through him, give "an answer of peace." The king then told the dreams; and Joseph, taught by God, at once explained them. He showed to Pharaoh that the two dreams were alike in meaning; that the cows and ears of wheat meant years; that there

would be seven years of plenty in Egypt followed by seven years of famine, when all that had been saved in the good years should be eaten up. He told Pharaoh this would surely take place, "because the thing is established by God."

He advised the king to choose some wise and careful man, and make him the chief man in the kingdom, with power to appoint officers who should store up the corn in the years of plenty, and keep it carefully, so that it might be ready to feed the people when the seven years of famine came.

Pharaoh and the nobles saw that this was good advice, and, believing that Joseph spoke by the Spirit of God, because he spoke so wisely, Pharaoh chose him to be the ruler over the people. "Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou."

He took his ring from his hand and gave it to Joseph, had him dressed in fine robes, put a chain of gold round his neck, made him ride in one of the royal chariots, and bade his people bow to him as he passed. Not only did he make him ruler over the land, with full power to do what he pleased, but he gave him for a wife the daughter of one of the chief priests of Egypt.

What a change in the life of Joseph, the poor Hebrew lad, sold into slavery by his wicked brothers, and only a few hours before a prisoner, with no hope of release! Now he was no more Joseph unjustly punished, the servant of the captain of a prison, but the most powerful man in Egypt, second only in dignity to Pharaoh himself, and named, in Egyptian fashion, Zaphnath-paaneah, meaning "one who saves." No doubt the chief butler was very humble before him, and hoped that he would forget his long forgetfulness of his promise to help him.

Pharaoh soon found what a wise choice he had made. Joseph was now a grown-up man, full of health and activity, wise and able as a ruler. The seven years of plenty came exactly as he said they would. There was abundance of every kind of food, and Joseph and his officers "gathered corn as the sand of the sea;" so plentiful indeed was it that they left off counting the stores they made, for "it was without number."

Never had been known such a harvest, and wise Joseph collected large stores to be ready for the years of famine which he knew were coming. He was very great and very happy. We may suppose he often

thought about his old father, wondered if he was still alive, and whether his brothers were kinder than they used to be, and ever thought of him. He had two little sons of his own now, whom, we may be sure, he loved as dearly as Jacob had loved himself and little Benjamin. His eldest son he named Manasseh, which meant in Hebrew, "not forgotten;" and to the second he gave the name Ephraim, another Hebrew word meaning "fruitful," for, said he, "God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

In the midst of all his state, and powerful as he was, the good and wise Joseph remembered his native land and the language which had been taught him by Jacob and his mother Rachel. He did not give his children Egyptian names, but names which, in the language of his childhood, showed that he had not forgotten what he had been, and how thankful he was that he had prospered in a strange land.

When the seven fruitful years were ended there came the seven years of famine. No corn grew in all the land, and the people in their distress cried to Pharaoh for bread. Had it not been for Joseph, all in Egypt would have died of hunger. There would not have been any bread for the weak old men and women, nor for the little babies. Pharaoh himself and all his great men might have died, and none of the magicians would have been wise enough to show how food could be got. But Joseph had stored up so much that now he was able to give food to all. For seven years he fed all the people of the great land of Egypt, and had enough besides to sell to men who came from other countries, for the famine was very grievous in other places.

Joseph did not give the corn to the people of Egypt, but sold it to them. First he took money, then horses and cattle, and then he gave corn in exchange for the land owned by the Egyptian people. He removed them from the open country to cities, where they could live without the cattle he had bought. He did not take the land belonging to the priests, but gave them food, and allowed them to keep the lands which had been given them by Pharaoh.

The people had great respect for Joseph's wisdom, but perhaps they thought it hard at first that he should take their land and cattle; but he gave the land back, with seed to sow on it, and they were to keep for themselves four parts of all that was grown, the other being given to Pharaoh. That fifth part he took for the king, in payment for food in the seven years of famine.

While Joseph was thus ruling so wisely over Egypt, his father Jacob was alive. In the place where he dwelt the famine was felt, and there was but little food for his family and for the cattle, sheep, and goats. Jacob heard that in Egypt there was plenty of corn, and that the chief man of the country was selling it to any who wished to buy. He therefore told his elder sons to go down to Egypt and get food, "that we may live and not die." He sent them all except Benjamin, his youngest, Joseph's brother, for he could not bear to part with him, and feared the dangers of the long journey. The ten brothers reached Egypt and went to Joseph to ask him to sell them some corn.

They could not know that the great Egyptian ruler, so grand and powerful, surrounded by high officers, wearing rich robes and riding in a fine chariot, was the brother whom they had cast into a pit and sold to the merchants many years before; but he knew them well. There was his eldest brother Reuben, who had sometimes been kinder to him than the others, and there was Judah who had proposed to kill him, and who had taken the lead in selling him. He remembered, too, the dreams of his boyhood, and as the ten men bowed before him, he saw how they had been fulfilled.

He would not make himself known to his brothers, but desired to hear from them whether his father yet lived. So he spoke roughly, and said they were spies, come "to see the nakedness of the land." They denied that they were spies, and, to show who they were, they told Joseph that they were the sons of a man in the land of Canaan, ten brothers of a family of twelve, of whom, said they, "the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not." Little did they think when they said "one is not," meaning Joseph, of whom they had not heard for so many years, and whom perhaps they supposed to be dead, that he was at that moment listening to what they said!

Joseph still pretending to believe that they were spies, put them into prison for three days, and told them that, to prove that they were not spies, they must bring to him their young brother, and that one of them must remain there until Benjamin came. In their trouble—for they feared that nothing would make Jacob part with his youngest son whom he loved so dearly—they thought of their cruelty to Joseph, of his tears and prayers for mercy, and of their hard-heartedness.

Reuben reproached the others, and reminded them how he had tried

to protect Joseph, and they would not hear him; therefore, he said, "his blood is required," meaning that the Lord was now punishing them for their sin. They did not know that Joseph well understood what they said, for he had not spoken to them in the Hebrew language, but through an interpreter; but he heard all, and unable to conceal his feelings when his brothers spoke of their cruelty in the wilderness, he went away and wept in secret.

JACOB'S SONS IMPRISONED BY JOSEPH AS SPIES.

When he came back he again looked sternly, and told them that Simeon must stay behind, but they might buy corn and go back to their father, returning with Benjamin, when Simeon should be set free. They paid for corn and loaded their asses, but on their way back they found that the money each of them had paid had been put back into his sack. Joseph had ordered this to be done, for he would not take money for his brothers' food, and in that way returned good for evil.

They had a strange story to tell their father, who could not be persuaded to consent to Benjamin's going to Egypt. In vain Reuben, the eldest, promised that he would take care of him; but Jacob only said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone; if mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

But the food the brothers had brought was soon eaten, and once more they and their cattle were almost starving. Again poor, sorrowing old Jacob was urged to let Benjamin go, and at last he gave way, with tears, praying, "God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin."

When they reached Egypt Joseph had a feast made, and gave orders that they should dine with him. They were much afraid that he might think they had stolen the money which was found in their sacks, for they did not know that he had caused it to be put there; but he said kindly, "Your God, and the God of your fathers hath given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money."

He asked them about their father; and when he saw Benjamin he could not hide his feelings, but went into his own chamber and wept for joy that he had again seen his mother's son. Coming back, having washed his face so that they might not see the marks of his tears, he had food set before them, especially before Benjamin, who had five times as much given him as any of the others.

They left Egypt joyfully enough, for Simeon was with them, and Benjamin was safe; but they soon had fresh cause of distress. Joseph ordered his steward not only again to put the money in the sacks with the food, but to put into Benjamin's sack also the silver cup out of which he himself drank, and to follow them, and when they were some distance on the road to charge them with taking the cup. He did so, and searched the sacks, and there, in Benjamin's sack, was found the cup.

They were taken back, and then Joseph pretended to be very angry, and said the one in whose sack the cup was found must remain behind and be his servant, but the rest might go back. The brothers were full of trouble; they felt that they dared not return to Jacob without Benjamin; and Judah begged Joseph to let him go. He told him how dearly the lad was loved by his father, that the loss would kill him, and offered to stay behind in his stead and be a slave in his place.

While he spoke Joseph's heart was full; he thought of the poor old father sorrowing for the loss of his two darling sons, and he could keep his secret no longer. Sending away all his officers and guards, he wept aloud, and then told his brothers who he was, how he had been treated, and how he had prospered in the land. "It was not you," he said, "that sent me hither, but God."

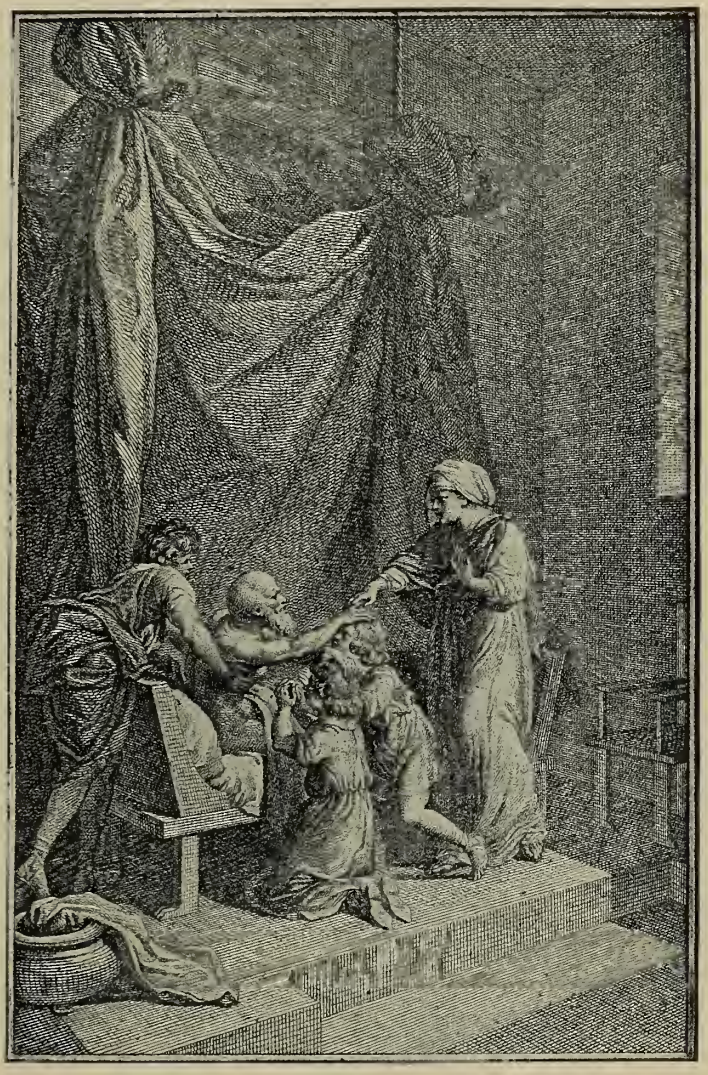
He bade them return and tell his father to come to him, with all his flocks and herds, and children's children, and they should have a home in Goshen, a fine land, a part of Egypt. Pharaoh soon heard that Joseph had found his brothers, and was well pleased. He gave them wagons and treasure, and Joseph sent to his father asses laden with the good things of Egypt.

JOSEPH BECOMING KNOWN TO HIS BRETHREN.

What joyful news for Jacob, in the land of Canaan! although he could scarcely believe it at first; but when his sons told him what Joseph had said, his spirit revived, and he said, "It is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die." In a vision, God told him to go without fear, for the Lord would be with him, and would bring him safely back. So Jacob, and all that were with him, left Beer-sheba and went to Goshen, where he met Joseph.

And what a meeting it must have been, the fond father seeing again his son whom he had mourned as dead, and the good son embracing the father whom he loved so well! Pharaoh saw Jacob and spoke kindly to him, and the old man—he was then a hundred and thirty years of age—blessed the king. Seventeen years longer he lived happily in Egypt, and his sons and their children became rich. When he felt that death was near, he called Joseph and asked him to promise that he should not be buried in Egypt, but that he might be laid in the grave of his fathers.

He asked for Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and blessed them. Manasseh being the eldest, Joseph led him to the right hand of Jacob, but Jacob placed his right hand on the head of Ephraim, and his left on that of Manasseh. Joseph was rather vexed at this; and, thinking his father had made a mistake, for his eyes were dim with age so that he could not see, took his hand and tried to place it on the head of the elder lad, telling Jacob that was the first-born. The dying man would not change his hands, but said, "I know it, my son, I know it; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he."



JACOB BLESSING THE SONS OF JOSEPH.

When he had blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, he blessed Joseph, whom he had always loved so well, and who had been such a good son; told him that he had left him a larger share of his possessions than any of his brothers would have, and made a prophecy, which was fulfilled several hundred years afterwards in the time of Moses—"Behold, I die; but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers." Then he called his sons round him, and prophesied regarding them and their children, and having again asked that he might be buried in the cave of Machpelah, "gathered up his feet into the bed," and died.

He was buried in great state, for not only all his sons, but the great officers of Pharaoh's kingdom, followed the body to Canaan, making a great mourning, so that the people of the land named the place to which they brought the body, Abel-mizraim, "the mourning of the Egyptians." When they returned, Joseph's brothers feared that he might now remember the evil they had done him; but he forgave them freely, and "spake kindly unto them."

A hundred and ten years old was the great and good Joseph when he died. In all the land of Egypt there was none more honored, but, like his father, he desired to be buried in his own land, and his last words were, "Ye shall carry my bones from hence." Before he died he repeated the prophecy which his father Jacob had made, that God would bring his people out of Egypt "unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and Jacob."

His body was embalmed, that is, preserved by an art which the Egyptians practised, so that it would not decay; and the Israelites, who had so much reason to hold him in remembrance, kept the body throughout all their troubles and wanderings for hundreds of years, until they reached the Promised Land, where he was buried, as he had desired, in the cave of Machpelah, where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been buried.

## MOSES IN EGYPT.

MANY years passed away. Joseph was dead, and all his brothers. A new generation of Israelites now lived in Egypt; they were very many; the country was full of them. A new king was reigning, who did not know Joseph; and he was very cruel, and hated the Israelites, and wished to kill them all. He commanded them to do very hard work in the fields, and in making brick; and their cruel masters beat them, and were very unkind to them.

And did they die when the king gave them all this hard work, which made them so weak and tired? No, because God kept them; and therefore nothing could hurt them; they grew and multiplied more and more. And why did God care for them so much? Because he had promised Abraham, many years before, that his children should be like the sand for multitude, and like the stars in the sky, which we cannot count. God never forgets his promises, nor his people who love and serve him.

But God had promised Jacob to bring his children home to Canaan, and now they were far off from their possessions;—had not God forgotten this promise? No: we read that he told Abraham, that his children should go to a strange country, and be afflicted here till the end of 400 years. God knew the time; soon the 400 years would be over, then the Israelites would be sent home to their own land again.

But Pharaoh, the cruel king, did not know God, and he tried again and again to destroy the Israelites. He commanded every little Israelitish boy that was born, to be thrown into the river and drowned. The poor mothers loved their dear children, and cried bitterly about this cruel, wicked law; but the king had no pity, and many of the little boys were thrown into the river and drowned. But God loved those children; and when they died he took their souls to be with him in heaven.

There was a woman of the family of Levi, who loved God, and her husband too was a good man. God gave them a little boy. The parents loved this dear child, and tried to save him from the cruel king. For three months the mother hid her child, that he might not be drowned; but when he grew older and larger she could not hide him any longer. But she knew God could keep her little boy, if she could not, and she told all her sorrow to him. God can help us when we are in trouble, and he can take care of us when our dearest friends cannot; and he was pleased now to help this poor woman who trusted in him, and to take care of her little child.

The mother gathered some reeds, and platted them into a little basket or ark; and then she took her dear child, and put him into the ark, and carried him to the river. Did she throw him in? No, she laid him gently among the high grass and reeds, by the side of the river. She could take care of him no more, so she gave him up to God, who alone could keep him; but she left Miriam, her little girl, to watch near her brother.

Soon she saw some people coming; who were they? They were ladies; one was the cruel king's daughter, and the others were her maids; and they walked along by the river, for the princess was going to bathe. They did not see Miriam; she was a little way off, but she could see them, and hear all they said. The king's daughter soon saw the ark among the reeds, and she sent her maid to fetch it.

The maid ran and took up the ark, and brought it to her mistress,

and opened it. Pharaoh's daughter was not like her cruel father; she pitied the poor babe, and said, "It is one of the Hebrew children." When Miriam heard the kind lady speak, she went up to the princess, and said, "Shall I go and call a Hebrew woman to nurse the child for thee?"

THE FINDING OF MOSES.

Pharaoh's daughter said, "Go." Then Miriam ran home, and told her mother about the kind lady who wished to save the dear babe; and asked her mother to come and nurse it.

Miriam and her mother went back to Pharaoh's daughter, and the kind princess said, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will pay thee thy wages." The mother brought him home and nursed him, and he grew; and when he was a little older she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter again. The princess loved the child; and she said, "He shall be my son, and I will name him Moses (or, drawn out), because I drew him out of the water."

How kind God is to those who love and pray to him! He heard this mother's prayer and saved her child from a cruel death. And God loves to save children now. He keeps them when they are in their cradles; he keeps them when they run about, and gives them health, and strength and all they have. Jesus says, "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

MIRIAM THE PROPHETESS

MOSES BRINGING WATER FROM THE ROCK

Ex. 17 : 5—6 ; Num. 20 : 9—10 ; Psalm 78 : 15—20 ; I Cor. 10 : 4

Pharaoh's daughter loved Moses, and she told the wise men of Egypt to teach him all they knew; for she wished Moses to be wise. The Egyptians knew many things and had much wisdom; but not the best wisdom; they did not know nor worship the true God. They worshipped animals; bulls, and sheep, and dogs, and cats, and crocodiles, and insects. But the Israelites who lived in Egypt remembered the God of their fathers, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; and the mother of Moses, no doubt, taught him holy things, true wisdom, when he was a very little boy; and she prayed for him that he might be kept from sin, and that he might love and serve the Lord.

And God heard her prayer; and taught Moses by the Holy Spirit, that riches and worldly things could not make him happy, nor save his soul: that God alone could keep him from sin; and that he could be saved only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who should at a future time come down from heaven and die for sinners. Pharaoh's daughter called him her son, and wished to give him great riches; but Moses did not wish to be rich: he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." St. John says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

If we love pleasure, or riches, or power, or sin, more than we love God, we cannot be his children. We must give him all our thoughts, all our affections, all our love. Jesus said to his disciples, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

When Moses was grown up he went to visit his brethren the Israelites, who were suffering so much in Egypt. One day he saw an Egyptian cruelly beating an Israelite; they were alone, but God's eye was upon them. God saw the wicked Egyptian and the poor Israelite, and sent Moses to help his suffering brother. Moses ran to the two men and saved the Israelite and killed the Egyptian, and hid the body in the sand.

The next day Moses went out again, and saw two men fighting. Were they Egyptians? No, they were both Israelites. Moses was grieved to see them so wicked: for God's people ought to be kind and gentle; brothers ought to love one another. So Moses went to them and tried to make peace between them. But the one who did the wrong would not

attend to Moses; and said, "Who sent thee to be a judge? Wilt thou kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian yesterday?"

When Moses heard this he was very much afraid, for he thought the people knew what he had done; and the king might be angry and seek to kill him. So Moses fled from Egypt and went to Midian and sat down by a well. As he sat there some young women came to the well to water their sheep; and Moses helped them and drew water for them. When they went home they told their father how kind Moses had been: their father's name was Jethro; and when he heard about Moses he sent for him, and gave him food, and asked him to live with him in Midian.

MOSES DEFENDING THE DAUGHTERS OF JETHRO.

Moses did so; and some time after he married one of Jethro's daughters, who was named Zipporah. Moses had not now the riches of Egypt, which he had when he lived at the king's house; he was a poor man, keeping Jethro's sheep in the wilderness. But Moses knew that God would take care of him; and he loved God better than all the fine things in Egypt.

But did God forget the Israelites, when Moses was gone? No; he heard their cry, and remembered his promise to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. "God looked upon the children of Israel." We may be sure that

God's eye is always upon us: he knows all our sorrows, and sees all our tears, and, in due time, he will comfort and deliver us, if we trust in him.

One day, Moses was keeping Jethro's sheep by Mount Horeb. As he sat there quietly and alone, he thought often of his poor brethren suffering in Egypt, and he asked God to help and deliver them. Moses had much faith; he knew that God had power to save the Israelites, and he believed that he would save them at the right time. While Moses was thinking of all this, he saw a bright light shining near him; and he looked up, and saw a bush burning with fire.

MOSES AT THE BURNING BUSH.

But the bush was not consumed; it did not wither away; the leaves and branches did not turn black, and crumble to pieces; and Moses wondered very much, and said, "Why is not the bush consumed? I will go and see." So Moses went to look; but when he came near, he heard a voice out of the bush, saying, "Moses, Moses." Who called him? What made the bush burn, and why was it not consumed? The voice said again, "The place where thou standest is holy ground. I am God; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." "Then Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."

But the Lord did not come to hurt his servant; he came to comfort

him, and to make him and his poor brethren happy. The Lord said, "I have seen my people's sorrow; I have heard their cry. I am come to send thee to Pharaoh: and thou shalt bring my people out of Egypt." But Moses was very much afraid, and said, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" It was not right of Moses to be afraid when God sent him; he ought to have obeyed directly; but the Lord was very kind and gentle, and he spoke again to comfort Moses.

He said, "I will be with thee; tell the people that I sent thee. If the king disobey my command, I have power to punish him; and I will send plagues upon Egypt, and bring out my people safely." But Moses was still unwilling to go, and said, "Perhaps the people will not believe me."

The Lord then told him to throw his rod upon the ground. Moses obeyed, and it became a serpent; and he fled from it for fear. But the Lord said, "Take it by the tail;" and Moses caught it, and it did not bite nor hurt him, but became a rod again in his hand directly. Then God told Moses to put his hand into his bosom. Moses obeyed, and his hand became covered with leprosy; but God told him to put his hand again into his bosom, and in a moment it was well. Then God told him to go and show these wonders to the people; that they might believe that he had sent him.

Was Moses willing to go to Egypt now? No; he was still afraid. He said, "Lord, I cannot speak well; my tongue is slow, and I have no words." But the Lord said, "Who hath made man's mouth? Who maketh the deaf, and the dumb, and the seeing, and the blind? Have not I, the Lord? Go; obey my command, and I will teach thee what thou shalt say."

But still Moses wished not to go. Then the Lord began to be angry; for though he is very kind and patient with his people, yet he does not like them to disobey his commands, nor to obey slowly and unwillingly. But the Lord said to Moses, "Aaron thy brother may go with thee; he can speak well; and I will teach you both what you shall do." Then Moses obeyed: he was timid and fearful in himself, but the Lord gave him strength and courage; so he went home, and took leave of Jethro, and called his wife Zipporah, and his two sons, and put them upon an ass, and returned to Egypt.

Then God said to Aaron, who was living in Egypt, "Go and meet Moses." So Aaron went into the wilderness, and soon saw Moses and his family coming; and he ran and kissed him. Moses had much to tell

Aaron about the wonders God had shown him; and he asked Aaron to go with him to the king, and command him to send away the Israelites. Aaron was willing to go; so they both went, and called the elders of the Israelites, and told them that God had seen their sorrows, and was going to deliver them. Then they bowed down their heads, and worshipped.

Moses and Aaron went together to the king, another Pharaoh, who was now reigning in Egypt, and said, "The Lord commands thee to let the Israelites go." But Pharaoh answered, "I do not know the Lord; and I will not let them go." Then the king told the Israelites' masters to give them more work, and the poor people were not able to finish their hard tasks in making brick; and their cruel masters beat them, and said, "You are idle; fulfil your work, your daily tasks."

THE ROD OF AARON CHANGED INTO A SERPENT.

The Israelites cried to Moses, and Moses went to God, and told him all his sorrow. God knew all; his eye was upon them, and very soon he would deliver them, and he said, "I have heard their groaning, I remember my covenant with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and I will bring my people to Canaan as I have promised."

Moses was now eighty years old; but he was not weak and feeble, as many old men are; he was strong and powerful. God made him so,

because there was much for Moses to do before he died. It is God who gives us all our health and strength; and if we are well and strong we must not be idle. There is much for us all to do; and we must use our health and strength for God. "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

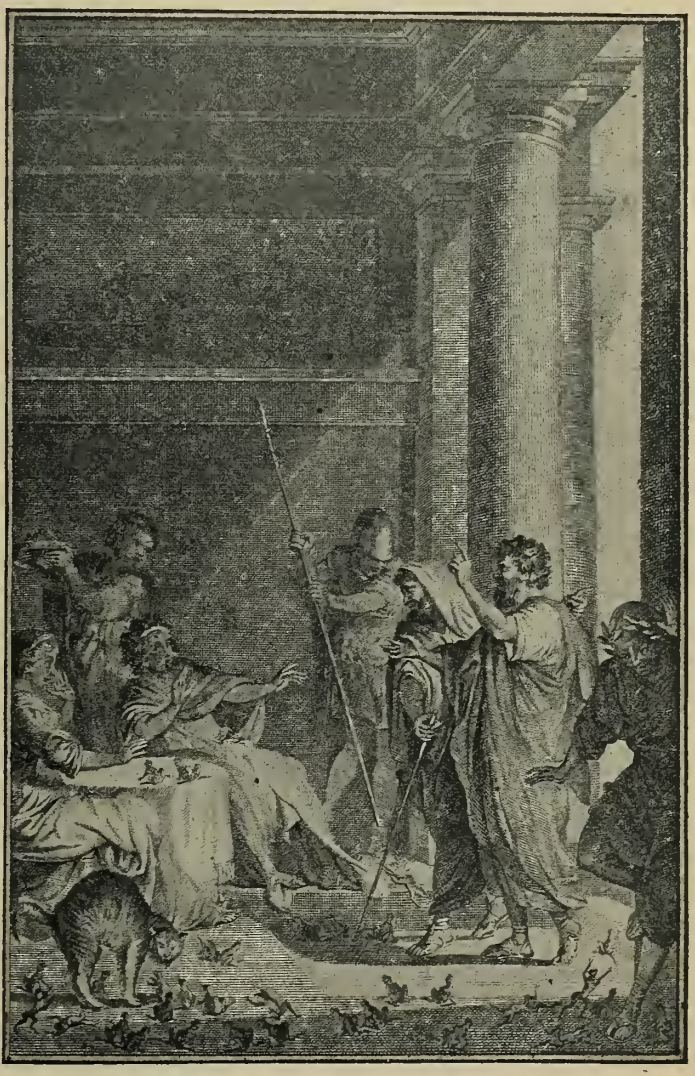
THE WATERS OF EGYPT CHANGED TO BLOOD.

God now gave Moses and Aaron power to do wonders, and to work miracles before Pharaoh. They went to the king; and Aaron threw down his rod before him, and it became a serpent. But Pharaoh called his wise men, and told them to try to do the same; and they did so with their enchantments. Had they power to work miracles? No; perhaps they might have learned to tame serpents, so as to make them look like rods in their hands; and then they might have thrown them down, as Aaron did, and thus pretended to work a miracle.

But God made Aaron's rod swallow up their rods. Pharaoh did not care for this, nor did he obey the command to let Israel go; and then God said, he would punish Pharaoh, by turning his river into blood.

The river Nile is very useful in Egypt; no rain falls there to water the ground; but in the summer, the river rises, and overflows the country, and makes the land soft, and then the people sow their seed, and the grass

and corn soon spring up. Did Pharaoh and the Egyptians thank God, who gave them the Nile to water their land? No, the Egyptians forgot God; they made their river a god, and worshipped it, and sacrificed to it. But the Nile had no power to make the country fruitful; it was God who made it, and who swelled up its waters, and watered the land; and now he determined to punish and humble the Egyptians, and to turn their river-god into blood.



THE PLAGUE OF FROGS.

God did as he said. He told Moses to go and stretch his rod over the waters; and as soon as he did so, all became blood. The ponds, and the water in the vessels, and the beautiful river, all were blood. The fish died; the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river; and their river-god could not help them now. Did they repent and ask God to forgive them? No, and therefore God sent a new punishment upon them.

And seven days were fulfilled, after that the Lord had smitten the river. And the Lord spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me. And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs: and the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the houses of thy

servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneading-troughs: and the frogs shall come up both on thee and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt. And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt. And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.

Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the Lord, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord. And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me; when shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the river only? And he said, To-morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the Lord our God.

And the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from thy servants, and from thy people; they shall remain in the river only. And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh: And Moses cried unto the Lord because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh. And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields. And they gathered them together upon heaps: and the land stank. But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt. And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast. Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and

RUTH GLEANING IN THE FIELDS OF BOAZ

THE SCRIBES READING THE CHRONICLES TO AHASUERUS

Ezra 4: 15; Ezra 6: 1—2; Esther 6: 1; Daniel 9: 2

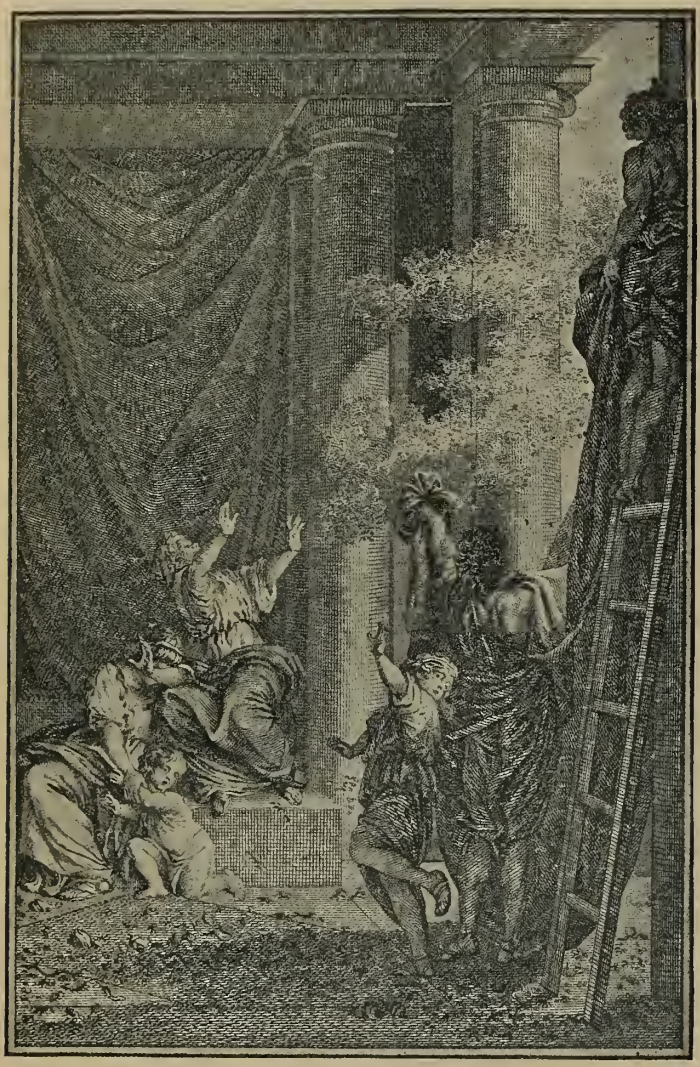
stand before Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me. Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are. And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there: to the end thou mayest know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to-morrow shall this sign be.

THE PLAGUE OF LICE.

And the Lord did so; and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies. And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land. And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as he shall command us. And Pharaoh said, I will let

you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: intreat for me.

And Moses said, Behold, I go out from thee, and I will intreat the Lord that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, to-morrow: but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord. And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the Lord. And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one. And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.



THE PLAGUE OF FLIES.

Then the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. For if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous plague. And the Lord shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all that is the children's of Israel.

And the Lord appointed a set time, saying, To-morrow the Lord shall do this thing in the land. And the Lord did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died; but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one. And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

THE PLAGUE OF MURRAIN.

And the Lord said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt. And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven: and it became a boil, breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast. And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians. And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them.

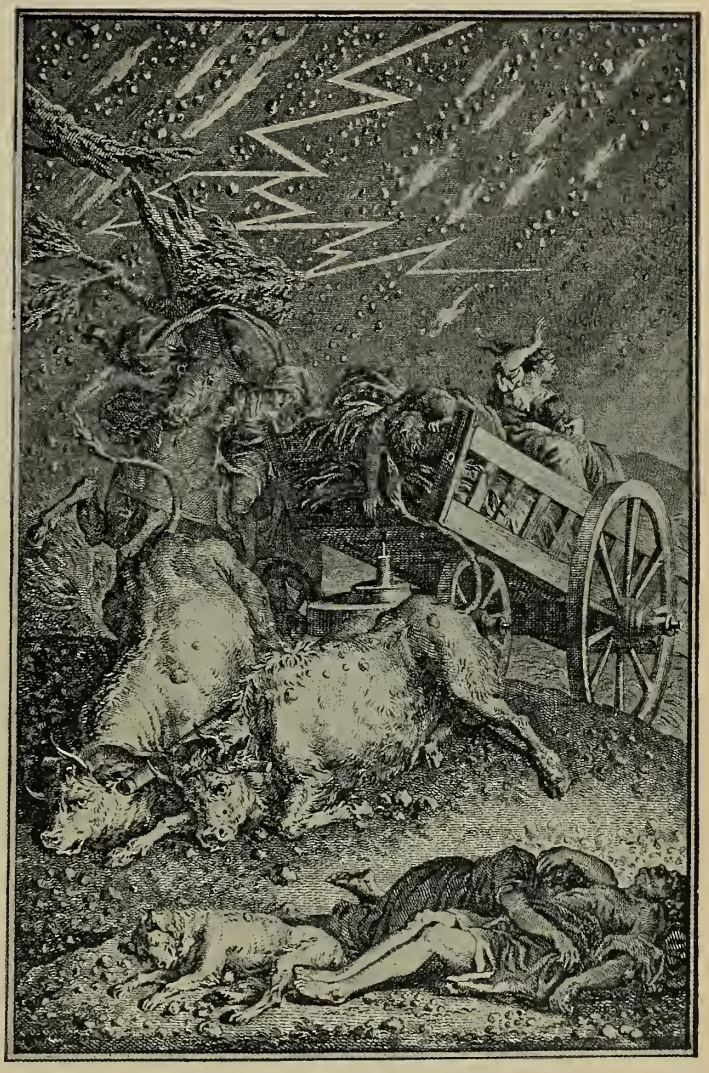
And the Lord said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of the

Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. For now I will stretch out my hand that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go.

THE PLAGUE OF BOILS AND BLAINS.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along the ground, and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.

And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Intreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer. And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city I will spread abroad my hands unto the Lord and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail, that thou mayest know how that the earth is the Lord's.



THE PLAGUE OF HAIL.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him: and that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am the Lord. And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve me.

Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold to-morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast: and they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth: and they shall eat the residue

of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field: and they shall fill thy houses, and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians; which neither thy fathers, nor thy fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day. And he turned himself and went out from Pharaoh.

THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left. And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that day and all that night; and when it was morning the east wind brought the locusts.

And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they: before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left; and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.

Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the Lord your God, that he may take away from me this death only. And he went out from Pharaoh and intreated the Lord. And the Lord turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red Sea; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt. But Pharaoh would not let Israel go.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days; they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed; let your little ones also go with you. And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt-offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and we know not with what we must serve the Lord, until we come thither. But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go. And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die. And Moses said, I will see thy face again no more.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether. Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.

And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill; and all the

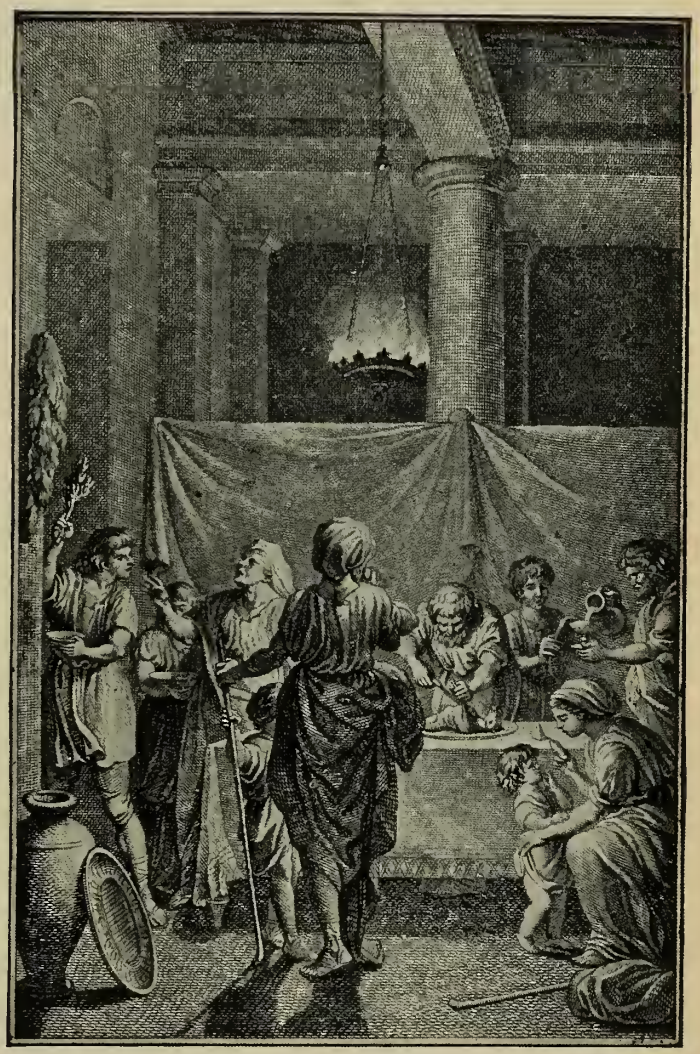
first-born of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast; that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger. And the Lord said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.

DEATH OF THE FIRST-BORN OF EGYPT.

And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.

JOSEPH CAST INTO THE PIT

And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this self-same day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses; for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.



THE FIRST PASSOVER.

Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the top beam and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-

born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.

THE ISRAELITES DEPARTING FROM EGYPT.

And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also.

When Moses and the Israelites left Egypt in so much haste, they did not forget Joseph's dying command, but carried his bones with them. Then they went on, and came to the Red Sea. But when Pharaoh heard they were gone, he commanded his servants to bring his chariots, and his horses; and he went with a great army to bring the people back again. He overtook them by the sea; they were all resting in their tents; a pillar of cloud was before them; God gave them this pillar to show them the road by day; and by night, he put before them a pillar of fire to give them light. They were safe under God's keeping.

But soon they looked up; and what did they see? Pharaoh and

the Egyptians coming after them very quickly, with their chariots and horses. The Israelites cried to the Lord, and said to Moses, "Why hast thou brought us away from Egypt? We shall die, now, here in this wilderness!" They forgot that God was still with them; but Moses said, "Fear not; be still, and the Lord will fight for you."

Then the Lord commanded the people to go on. But where could they go? The great sea was before them, and there was no bridge to go over, and no ships to carry them across. What could they do? God knew; he could find a way for them to escape. The pillar which was before them, moved behind; it stood now between the Israelites and the Egyptians; but the side next the Israelites was bright, to give them light; and the side next the Egyptians was dark and cloudy, so that they could not see to do the Israelites any hurt all that night.

PHARAOH'S HOST OVERWHELMED IN THE SEA.

Then God told Moses to stretch his rod over the sea; and the Lord sent a very strong wind to blow back the water; and in the morning there was a dry road through the sea, and the waters stood like a wall on each side. Who did this wonder? Not Moses, not his rod, not the strong wind alone;—it was God, God who has power to do all things. The Israelites walked through the sea, all of them, on dry ground; not one was drowned, for God held back the waters till they were all gone over safely.

Then the Egyptians tried to pursue them, and went in after them; but God looked angrily at them through the pillar, and made them fear, and took off the wheels of their chariots. And then he told Moses to stretch his rod over the sea, and the waters came back again upon Pharaoh, and his army, and his servants, and chariots, and horses, and they were all drowned.

In the morning, the Israelites saw all their enemies lying dead upon the sea-shore. The Egyptians could hurt them no more now; their bodies were cold and dead, and their souls were gone to be judged by God, whom they had rebelled against and disbelieved. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

The Israelites thanked God, and sang praises to him; and Miriam and the women prayed and danced for joy. Then they went on into the wilderness of Shur. They wandered there three days, and found no water. At last they came to Marah, and there was water; but the water was bitter, and they could not drink it. Then the people were discontented again, and said to Moses, "What shall we drink?" Was this right? No; the Israelites were discontented and unbelieving people. They knew God had power to give them water if he pleased; and they knew that they ought to be patient if he gave them none; he had done many wonderful things for them, and he could do as many more; but they forgot his kindness, and were impatient, and angry, and discontented.

Moses was sorry to find the people doing wrong again so soon. He could not comfort them; he could not make the water good; but he remembered who could, and he cried to the Lord. And did God attend to Moses? Yes; he did not forget his distressed people. Moses "cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet."

Was there any wonderful power in this tree? No, the power was in God; the tree could do no good without him. God taught his people how great his power is, because he wished them to trust in him, and to feel safe and happy in his keeping. We ought all to trust him. He knows what is best for us; and, if we are his people, we are safe in all places, and may have comfort in all our sorrows. We can all do something towards sweetening the lives of the poor, the troubled, and the wretched. Kind words and deeds are the tree that will make the bitter waters sweet; and the young can do this as well as the old.

# THE ISRAELITES IN THE WILDERNESS.

WHEN God sweetened the bitter waters of Marah, he spoke kindly to the Israelites, and said, "If you will obey me, and do what is right, then I will be with you, and keep, and bless, and strengthen you; and I will not send any of those diseases and plagues upon you, which I sent upon the Egyptians." Then they were comforted, and went on to Elim, and there they found twelve wells of water, and many date palm trees; and they pitched their tents there. They were very glad to see these trees. The fruit is very pleasant and refreshing to poor tired wanderers in the wilderness; the trees on which it grows can live in these hot places, and water is always found near the date trees.

When the Israelites went away from Elim, they came into another wilderness, the Desert of Sin. Then they began to be discontented; and they murmured again, and said, "We shall die of hunger, for there is no food here. When we were in Egypt, we had plenty; but now, we have nothing; why did you bring us here?" How unthankful these people were! God had delivered them from their cruel masters, and brought them safely through the sea; and he had given them sweet water to drink, and promised always to take care of them; and yet they would not trust him.

Moses went again to God, and told him all his sorrows, and all that the people said. Then God answered, "I have heard their murmurings; go, and tell them, I will give them flesh to-night to eat; and in the morning I will give them bread." Where could they find flesh? Must they kill all their flocks and herds? No; God sent them some birds called quails, which came in great numbers, and covered the tents; and the Israelites caught, and killed, and ate them in the evening.

And was this all God gave them? No; in the morning, when the dew was gone, the Israelites saw the ground covered with a little round thing, white like frost. It was new to all the people, and they came out and looked, and wondered, and asked, "What is it?" Nobody knew; but Moses said, "This is the bread God has given you to eat." How wonderful was this! God sent this sweet bread to feed his people in the wilderness, where there was no corn for them to eat.

The Israelites called the new food which God sent, manna; it was sweet and nice, like honey. Moses said, "You must gather the manna

fresh every morning. God promises to send it every day; but you must not keep it till the next morning. Every one of you must gather an omer full, but the day before the Sabbath, you must gather two omers full, and keep one of them for the Sabbath; for God will send no manna on the Sabbath day." Some of the people would not believe Moses; they determined to try and keep the manna till the morrow, and see if it would be good.

THE ISRAELITES GATHERING MANNA.

But, in the morning, when the people looked at the manna they had kept, they found that it was full of worms, and smelt badly; they could not eat it, but threw it away. And did not the manna saved for the Sabbath become bad? No; because God kept it good; he did not wish his Holy Sabbath to be broken, and he had power to keep the manna fresh and sweet if he pleased. But there were some more disobedient people who would not believe Moses, nor attend to God's command. They went out on the Sabbath day to gather manna. Did they find it? No: God did not send any, and they went home again empty; and God was angry with them for their disobedience.

The Sabbath is not a day on which we ought to do any work. It is God's day; he kindly gave it to us, that we might have more time to attend to our souls, and to think of God, and death, and judgment, and

heaven, and hell. We should not think much of our food on this holy day; we should prepare it the day before, as God told the Israelites to do. We have our food from God, as they had. It is not rained down from heaven, because God does not now work miracles; and we live in a country where there is plenty of corn to make bread.

But God only sends down rain from heaven to make the corn grow, and he makes the sun shine to ripen it. He alone can cause the grass to spring up, and give food to the beasts of the field. We must pray, "Give us day by day our daily bread." And when we eat it, we must thank God who gave it, and not wish for more nor better food than he sends.

The Israelites now went on, through the wilderness of Sin, to Rephidim. How did they know the way? God went before them in the pillar of cloud by day and in the pillar of fire by night. When the pillar stopped, they stopped; and when the pillar moved, they moved, and followed it wherever it went. While we live, we are like the Israelites, travelling in the wilderness; but, if we are God's people, we need not fear, because he is always by us. He does not go before us in a pillar of cloud and fire; but his hand is always over us to guide and keep us, and his eye sees us wherever we are. We must pray God to lead us in the right way, in the way to heaven.

There was no water at Rephidim; and the people murmured again, and were very angry with Moses, and very unthankful to God. Then Moses cried to God, and he heard the prayer. God told him to go to Mount Horeb, and strike the rock; and he promised that then water should come out. Moses obeyed God, and struck the rock, and water came out. It was God's power that did this miracle; not Moses, nor the rod, but God alone, could bring water out of the rock.

There were some wicked people, who lived not far from this wilderness, called Amalekites, and now they came to fight with Israel, in Rephidim. Moses called Joshua his servant, and said to him, "Choose men, and go and fight with the Amalekites; and I will go up to the top of the mountain, with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua and the soldiers went to fight; and Moses and Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. What did they do there? Moses held up his hand, with the rod of God in it, and prayed God to give the Israelites power to conquer their enemies. God heard Moses pray, and put strength into the soldiers' hands, and gave them power over their enemies.

But Moses was tired of holding up his hands; they were heavy, and fell down, and then the Amalekites became strong, and the Israelites became weak. But Aaron and Hur took a large stone, and put it under Moses, and he sat upon it; and Aaron and Hur held up his hands all the day till the sun went down. And God blessed the Israelitish soldiers; they conquered their enemies, and drove all the wicked Amalekites away.

VICTORY OF THE ISRAELITES OVER AMALEK.

The Israelites now came into the wilderness of Sinai, and pitched their tents before the mountain. Moses went up into the mountain, and God talked to him there. God said, "Go, and tell the Israelites what wonderful things I have done for them, in saving them from the Egyptians, and bringing them here. They are my own people; and if they will love and obey me, I will keep them always, and give them all they want; and they shall be my children, and I will be their Father." Moses told the people what God said, and they all answered, "We will obey the Lord."

Then God said again to Moses, "Go, and tell the people to make themselves ready for the third day: for then I will come down upon the mountain to speak to them. They shall not go up, nor touch the mountain; whoever touches it shall be put to death. When the trumpet sounds, they shall come up to the mount." The people obeyed; they all washed

THE FINDING OF MOSES

their clothes, and made themselves ready for the third day. Why? Because God was coming, the holy God; the people were to remember how great and wonderful he is, and how weak and sinful they were; and to come before God with reverence.

In the morning, the Israelites looked towards the mountain; a thick black cloud was over it; and fire, and smoke, and lightning came out of the mountain, and all the ground shook. The people were very much frightened; but the trumpet sounded, and then Moses brought them all out, and made them stand round the mountain.

The trumpet sounded louder and louder, and Moses spoke, and God's voice answered him. Then the Lord came down on Mount Sinai, and called Moses; and Moses went up. God said, "Tell the people again, not to touch the mountain; but thou shalt come up, and Aaron with thee." Then Moses went down, and told them.

It was a very fearful thing to see the great mountain smoking, and the fire and lightning coming out of the thick black darkness. Why was it so fearful? Because God was there; the holy, powerful God; God who cannot look upon sin, and who has power to punish all those who disobey him. "Our God is a consuming fire." The Israelites trembled before him; and we must tremble too, if we have not been washed from our sins in the blood of Jesus. We have no power to escape; we cannot save ourselves from the anger of a holy God; but if we believe in Jesus, we are safe. We need not fear then, because God promises to accept all those who come to Jesus alone for salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

When the Israelites saw the lightning, and the blackness of the mountain, and heard the thunders, and the loud trumpet, they were very much afraid, and moved away from the mountain, and stood afar off. They said to Moses, "Speak thou to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die." But Moses said, "Fear not; God is come to prove you, and to tell you what you ought to do, that you may learn to know and serve him aright, that his blessing may be upon you." We are all poor, helpless sinners before God; our own obedience cannot take us to heaven, for we have disobeyed God many times. How then can we go to heaven? Jesus Christ alone can take us there. He bore the punishment of our sins upon the cross, and his blood can cleanse us: he was perfectly holy, he kept all the commandments; and, if we believe in him, God will accept us for his righteousness' sake.

But we must try to be like Jesus; we must wish and strive to be holy. We must ask him for all these things, that we may be made his own dear children by faith in Christ Jesus. And then we need not fear; because God has promised to save all who believe; and we shall not tremble at the day of judgment, when we stand before his throne, because, if our sins have all been washed away in Jesus' blood, and our hearts made new and clean by the Holy Spirit, we shall hear our Saviour say, "Come, ye blessed;" and we shall be taken up to heaven, away from sin and sorrow for ever.

When God had finished speaking, Moses came and told the people all he had said, and they answered, "We will obey the Lord; we will do what he commands us." Then Moses wrote all the words of God: and the Israelites offered sacrifices unto the Lord. Moses read the book of the law to the people, and they said again, "All that the Lord hath said, we will do, and be obedient." Then Moses and Aaron, and some of the elders of Israel, went up towards the mountain, and there they saw an appearance of the bright glory of God; but this could not hurt them, because God kept them safely; and they stayed there before him, and did eat and drink. Then God told Moses alone to come up to him, to receive the tables of stone upon which God had written the Ten Commandments.

Moses waited six days upon the mountain, with Joshua his servant; and then God called to him out of the cloud, and Moses went up, and was there in the mount forty days and forty nights. Moses was not afraid to be with God, because he was his father and his friend. We have no need to fear, when our sins are forgiven, and when we are at peace with God through Jesus Christ.

What did God say to Moses when he was in the mountain? He gave him many directions about the tabernacle which the Israelites were to make, where God was to be worshipped; and about the sacrifices, and priests, and the holy things which we shall soon read about; and then he gave Moses the two tables of stone, written with the finger of God. The people waited a long time for Moses, and wondered he did not come down to them, and then they began to be tired and impatient, and they went to Aaron and said, "Moses is gone away; we do not know what is become of him; make gods for us, and they shall go before us."

Did Aaron tell them how wicked and disobedient they were? No; Aaron sinned too, and let the people sin. He told them to give him their

golden earrings which were in their ears; so they brought them to Aaron, and he made them into a golden calf. Then the people said, "These be the gods who brought us up from Egypt;" and Aaron built an altar, and offered sacrifices to the calf, and made a feast; and the people ate and drank, and played before the image.

WORSHIPPING THE GOLDEN CALF.

They had soon forgotten the holy command of God, which he spoke to them from the mount, "Thou shalt not make any graven image." They had forgotten their own promise, which they made to Moses, "We will obey the Lord." They had forgotten to ask God's help to teach them to serve him. But did not God see? Was not he angry? Yes; he saw all; for his eyes are in every place; he knew when he was talking to his servant Moses what his disobedient people were doing; and he said to Moses, "Go down; the people have forgotten me, and they have made a golden calf, and worship it. I am angry with these disobedient people; I will destroy them; but I will keep thee, and make of thee a great nation."

But Moses prayed God to forgive these sinful people, and to remember his servants Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and his promises to them. Then God heard Moses' prayer, and did not destroy them all.

So Moses took the tables in his hands and went down again to

Joshua. Joshua said, "There is a noise in the camp;" but he did not know what the noise was. Moses listened, and said, "It is a singing that I hear;" and when they came near, they saw the golden calf, and the people playing, and dancing, and singing before it. Then Moses was angry, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and broke them under the mountain. Why was he angry? To see that these people had so soon forgotten their kind God, and their own promise to love and serve him.

They were helpless sinners, and we are so too. When we trust to our own strength and goodness, and forget to ask for the Holy Spirit to help and teach us, we are as forgetful of God, as unthankful, and as wicked as these Israelites were. Let us pray to God every day to keep us from sin, and to enable us to live always in his fear and love.

Then the Lord told Moses to come up again into the mountain, and to bring with him two tables of stone, like the first tables which he broke. Moses obeyed, and went up to Mount Sinai very early in the morning; and God came down in a cloud, and stood near him, and talked to him. Moses could not see the bright glory of the Lord; no living man can see that; but in heaven we shall see him face to face, and behold his glory for ever.

God passed by Moses, as he stood on the mountain, and spoke with a loud voice. What did he say? He told Moses what a good, and kind, and gracious God he is; a God who loves to forgive, and who saves all who come to him in faith; but a very holy God too; a God that cannot look on sin, and who punishes all those who will not repent and turn to him. When Moses heard God speak, he fell down and worshipped; and asked that great and holy God to forgive his sins, and the sins of the Israelites, and to make them his own people, and to keep and save them for ever. And did God hear the prayer? Yes, he promised to keep the Israelites still; and to give them the good land of Canaan, if they would obey and serve him, and no more make and worship the idols which the people around them served and worshipped.

Moses staid in the mountain again forty days; he neither ate nor drank, but God had power to keep him without food: and Moses was happy with his God, and loved to be there. God gave him many commands about what the people must do, and what they must not do; and he wrote again the ten commandments upon the new tables. When God had finished speaking, Moses came down from the mountain; and the

people looked at him, and saw that his face was bright and shining; and they feared to come near to him.

What made Moses' face shine? The bright glory of God, which rested upon him while he talked to him in the mountain. When Moses saw that it was painful for the people to look at him, he took a veil, and covered his face, and then spoke to them; but when Moses spoke to God he put off the veil.

MOSES AND THE TABLES OF THE LAW.

Moses told the people all the commands of God, and showed them the new tables; and he spoke to them about the Sabbath, the holy day of God, when they must do no work, because it is a day of rest, holy to the Lord. Then he told them about the tabernacle which God commanded them to make, where they were to worship him; and Moses asked them to bring their gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and the skins of animals, and beautiful stones; these things were to help to make the tabernacle, and all which was to be in it. The people were glad to bring their riches for the service of God; and many of them were very busy and industrious in this good work. The women spun hair for the curtains, and the men worked the stones, and the gold, and silver; all tried to do something.

There was a man named Bezaleel, who was very wise in many

curious works, in cutting stones and carving wood. This man loved God, and he was very glad he could do something in his service. He made all the things for the tabernacle, and taught other men to help him, that the work might be done quicker.

The tabernacle was made of boards, with bars put across; and these boards and bars were made of shittim wood covered with gold. At the entrance there were no boards, but five pillars of shittim wood covered with gold. Within the tabernacle, under the upper end, were four more pillars; a beautiful covering, called the vail, was hung over them; and this hid the inside, which was the most holy place, "the Holy of Holies." None could go in there but the High Priest; and he went only once a year.

THE LAVER OF BRASS.

In the Holy of Holies was placed the ark. The ark was a chest or box made of shittim wood, covered with gold; and there were rings in the sides, for poles to be put in when the ark was moved. The top of the ark was called the Mercy-seat; two golden angels, called Cherubim, were placed one on each side the Mercy-seat; they looked over it, and their wings covered the top.

In the ark were afterwards kept the tables of the commandments, Aaron's rod, and a golden pot full of manna, which God commanded to be

put there. Outside the vail was the altar on which incense was burnt, the table on which the holy bread, called shew-bred, was placed, and the great gold candlestick. The tabernacle stood in a large open court; pillars of brass surrounded it, and curtains were hung upon them. The brazen altar for burnt-offerings, and the great laver where the priests washed, stood in this court. There were coverings and curtains to the tabernacle and court.

Over the boards of the tabernacle was thrown a covering of fine linen beautifully worked in scarlet, and purple, and blue; over the linen, was a covering of goats' hair; over this, a covering of rams' skins dyed red; and another covering of thick skins over all. The people were not allowed to go into the tabernacle: but the priests went in every morning to offer incense, and every evening to light the lamps; and on the Sabbath to take away the old shew-bred from the table and to put on new. The sacrifices were offered in the court, where the people stood.

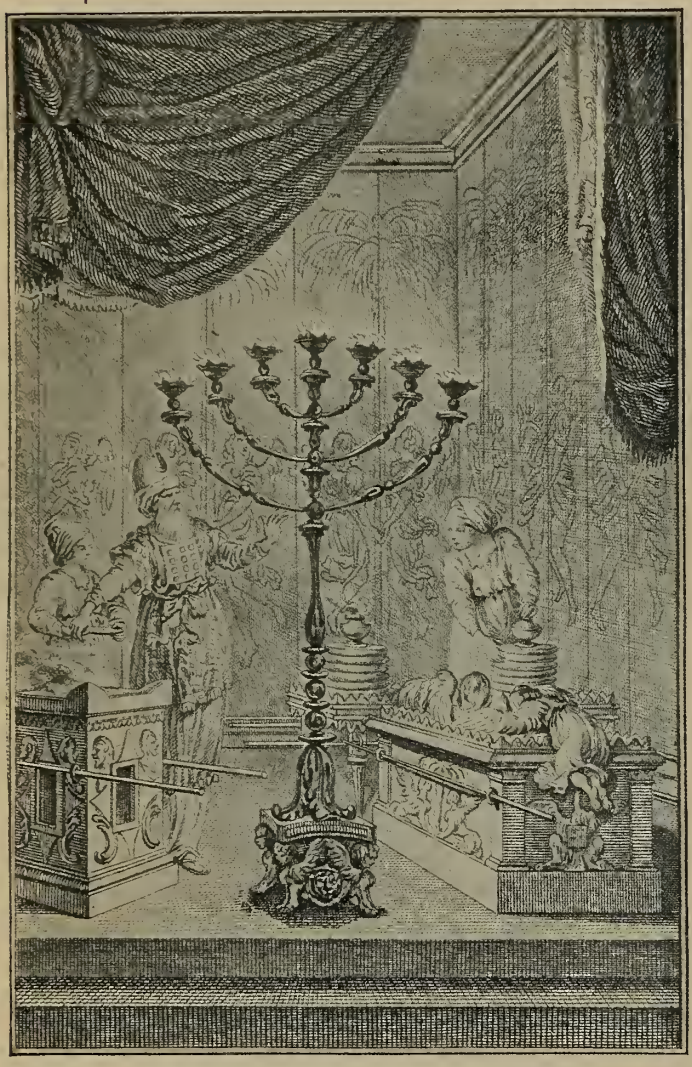
This was the beautiful tabernacle which God taught Moses to make for his worship. The things in it were likenesses, or types, of better and holy things. The Holy of Holies was a type of Heaven, that holy place which we cannot now see; and the ark there, with the bright glory shining above it, was a type of Christ. He is now in Heaven, and the holy angels stand before him, like the Cherubim over the ark. When the High Priest went into the most Holy Place, he sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice before the Mercy-seat. Jesus is our High Priest, and he offered a sacrifice for our sins before he went into Heaven. What sacrifice did he offer? He offered himself; he died upon the cross, and there poured out his blood, and bore the punishment of our sins. And now, like the Israelitish High Priest, he is gone into the Holy Place, not into the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle, but into Heaven of which that was the type; and there he pleads for us before the Mercy-seat, the throne of God.

When all was finished, God commanded Moses to set up the tabernacle. Then Moses put up the boards and bars, and threw the covering over; and took the ark and put it into the Holy Place, within the vail; then he placed the table outside, and put the bread upon it; and near the table he placed the candlestick, and lighted up the lamps.

He put the golden altar before the vail, and burnt sweet incense upon it; but the altar of burnt-offering, and the laver, he put in the court outside. Then Moses and Aaron washed at the laver: and the hangings were put up, and all was finished. A cloud covered the tabernacle,

and the glory of the Lord filled it. The cloud was always there by day, and fire by night. When the cloud was taken up, the people journeyed; and when it staid upon the tabernacle, then they rested in their tents.

When the people were still at Sinai, after the tabernacle was set up, God spoke again to Moses, and gave him many commands about his worship and service. God commanded that Aaron and his sons should be his priests or ministers. They were brought into the tabernacle, and there consecrated for the holy work. So now, ministers of the gospel are ordained and set apart, before they begin to teach and preach to the people. It is a holy office, and ministers ought to think much about it, and to pray to God for his help and blessing; and the people ought to pray, too, that God would give holy wisdom and power to his ministers, and make them faithful teachers of his word.



THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK.

All the Israelites stood at the door of the court of the tabernacle; and Moses brought Aaron and his sons to the great laver, and there washed them with water. The water in the laver had power only to wash their bodies; but it was a type of the blood which cleanseth from sin, and of the Spirit which sanctifies, or makes holy. Ministers should be washed in the blood of Christ, and have their hearts made clean by the Holy Spirit.

Then Moses put upon Aaron the holy garments which God commanded to be made; the coat, the girdle, the robe, the ephod, the breastplate, and the mitre. The coat was a long linen robe, with sleeves, and with a girdle worked in blue, and purple, and scarlet. The robe was a long, blue, linen gown, without sleeves; round the bottom were golden bells, and figures of pomegranates; the bells sounded when the High Priest went into the Holy Place. The ephod was a short robe, worked in blue, and purple, and scarlet and gold; it was made of linen, and round it was worn a beautiful girdle worked like the ephod. The breastplate was made of cloth, and was very thick. It had four rings of gold to join it to the ephod; twelve beautiful stones were set in the breastplate, three in a row; there were four rows of stones, and every stone had the name of one of the tribes of Israel written or cut upon it.

THE CONSECRATION OF AARON.

The tribes of Israel were the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob. These stones in the breastplate were called Urim and Thummim, that is, very light, perfect and beautiful things. Aaron wore the breastplate upon his heart when he went into the Holy Place, because he was to remember the people there and pray for them to the Lord.

The mitre was a linen turban, and in the front of it was a plate of

gold, on which was written, "Holiness to the Lord;" because the priests, the ministers of the Lord, must be holy in all they do and say, wherever they are. Aaron's sons did not wear all the beautiful robes which their father wore. Only the High Priest had the ephod, and breastplate, and robe, and mitre.

But Moses put upon the other priests the coat, and the girdle, and the bonnet or turban. All these holy and beautiful garments were put upon Aaron and his sons, to teach them how holy they ought to be, if they were honored to be priests and ministers of the Lord. All God's ministers, and all God's people, must be so too; they must have on Christ's righteousness, and be renewed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, or they cannot enter into Heaven.

Very soon after Aaron and his sons had been consecrated, they began their holy work. God's ministers and people must not be idle; all have something to do for God, and it should be begun directly. The work of the priests was to offer the sacrifices, and attend to the holy services of God in the tabernacle. The sacrifice of a lamb was offered every morning and every evening.

This teaches us that we need to have our sins washed away every day we live; when we rise in the morning, and when we go to bed at night, we ought to pray for grace and pardon, and for every blessing which we want. We should thank God for all he has given us, and ask him still to give us that which he sees right we should have. This was what the Israelites were taught to do; and if they prayed in faith, God heard their prayer, and gave them his blessing.

On the Sabbath day two more lambs were offered, besides the morning and evening sacrifices. We should love to worship God every day: but we should pray to him, and think about him, more on Sunday than on other days. The Sabbath is a day of holy rest; it belongs to God, and it must all be spent in his service. The Israelites were not allowed to do any work on God's holy day; and we should try to be like them, and be very thankful that God has given us a Sabbath, on which we may learn to know and serve him better.

In the beginning of every month, more sacrifices were to be offered; two bullocks, one ram, seven lambs, and a kid. Besides all these sacrifices, there were holy days and feasts, which God commanded to be kept.

There were three feasts in the year, when God commanded all the

men of Israel to appear before him. *First*, The feast of the Passover, in remembrance of the angel passing over the houses of the Israelites, when he destroyed the first-born of Egypt. They were to take a lamb, and eat it as they did in Egypt; and to offer sacrifices, and to keep seven days holy to the Lord. This feast was in the spring of the year. The paschal lamb was a type of Jesus Christ slain for our sins, to save our souls from destruction.

AARON OFFERING SACRIFICES.

*Second*, The feast of weeks, or Pentecost, fifty days after the Passover. This feast was in the summer, when the corn was reaped; and the people were then to give some of their fruits as a thank-offering to the Lord. It is God who gives us all our blessings, and we must thank and praise him for them. The Israelites in the feast of weeks were to remember that solemn time when God gave them the law from Sinai, fifty days after they went from Egypt. It was on the feast of Pentecost that the disciples of Jesus, many years after, met at Jerusalem, when the Holy Ghost came upon them, and gave them power to speak different languages.

*Third*, In the autumn, the Israelites were commanded to keep another holy time. The feast began by the blowing of trumpets, to call the people to attend. A few days after, was the great day of Atonement. Then they

were to remember their sins, and repent, and be sorry for them. No work might be done; and sacrifices were to be offered—bulls, and goats, and lambs, to teach the people that their sins must be washed away in the blood of the Great Sacrifice, to whom they must, in faith, look for salvation and eternal life.

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

And there are days when we should remember our sins, and pray for forgiveness, too. Every day we ought to do so, but some days still more particularly. The beginning of the year, and our own birthdays, are very solemn times; when we should remember our past sins, and pray earnestly to God to wash them all away in the blood of Jesus, and to give us grace to love and serve him better for the future.

Five days after the day of Atonement, God commanded the Israelites to keep the feast of Tabernacles. This was a time of joy for seven days. The Israelites were to gather branches from the trees, palm trees, and willow trees, and to make booths to live in, seven days. The women and children staid at their own houses; but the men dwelt in the booths, praising and thanking God, till the seven days were ended; and then they went home again to their families.

The booths were not their homes; they lived in them only a short

time. The Israelites were taught by this to remember the time when they lived in tents in the wilderness, and to thank God, in their pleasant houses in Canaan, for having brought them safely home. The home of God's people is above, in the Heavenly Canaan; there they will live for ever, and go out no more into a world of pain, and sin, and sorrow.

There were two of Aaron's sons who were priests, whose names were Nadab and Abihu. They were not humble and holy men like their father, but proud and disobedient. Without God's command, they ran into the tabernacle, with their censers in their hands, and offered strange fire, taken from the wrong place, and burnt incense before the Lord. God was angry with this rebellion, and he sent fire upon them, which struck them dead in a moment. Aaron saw his wicked sons die.

THE SONS OF AARON CONSUMED BY FIRE.

But Moses told Aaron, that God had said he would be sanctified by his priests, and that when they came before him, they must come with reverence: Nadab and Abihu had sinned, and God had punished them, and therefore Aaron and his sons were not to mourn, nor rend their clothes, but submit quietly to God. Then Aaron held his peace; he was full of sorrow; but he knew that God had done right, and humbly submitted to his will: he loved God's house, and law,

and glory, more than he loved his wicked sons, for he knew that God would not afflict him without just cause.

Parents cannot give their children new hearts; they can talk to them, and teach them, and tell them what is right, and pray for them; but they can do no more; they cannot save them; only God has power to do that; and therefore the children must themselves pray that their sins may be blotted out, and their hearts made new, and their souls saved; that they may follow their parents to heaven.

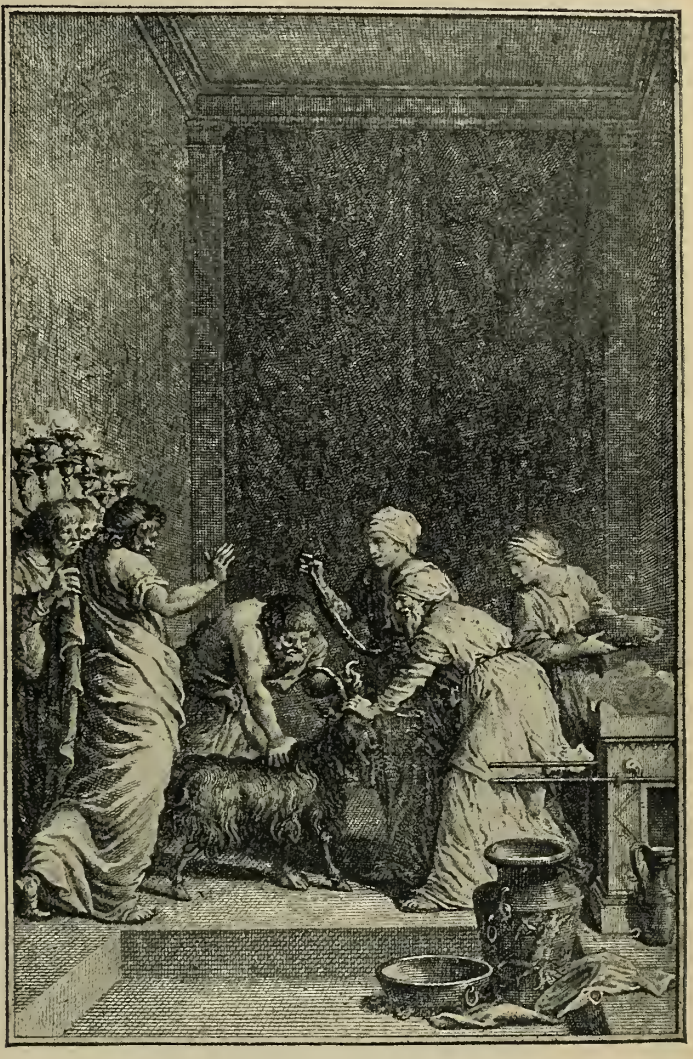
When Nadab and Abihu were killed, God gave Aaron some new commands, that he might not make God angry, as his sons had done. The High Priest was to go into the holy place, within the vail, only once a year, on the day of Atonement; and then he was to put on the holy garments. He was to offer a bullock for a sacrifice for his own sin, and a goat for the sins of the people, and to sprinkle the blood upon the Mercy-seat in the most holy place; and he was to take fire from the altar, and bring it within the vail, and burn incense before the Lord.

Afterwards, Aaron was to go out, and bring another goat alive: and to lay both his hands upon the goat's head, and confess his sins, and the sins of all the people, and put them upon the head of the goat. Then Aaron was to call a man, and tell him to lead the goat far away into the wilderness, that it might be seen no more. This goat was called the scape-goat.

Aaron, the Jewish High Priest, was a sinner like the people, and needed his own sins to be washed away. But our great High Priest, of whom Aaron was the type, needed no sacrifice, because he was all holy. He offered up the sacrifice of himself for our sins, not for his own; and then he went into the Holy Place, into Heaven, there to intercede for us before God. If we humbly come to Jesus, and ask him to take away our sins, he will forgive them all. God will never remember them again; they will be gone for ever. God says to those who come in faith to Jesus: "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

When the Israelites rested in their camp, waiting for the cloud to move, every one had his own place; and each tribe was to keep by itself. The tribes were placed in the form of a square; in the middle was the tabernacle and the court; to the East, near the tabernacle, were the tents of Moses, Aaron, and the priests; and the other Levites, the Kohathites, the Gershonites, and the Merarites, pitched their tents on the South, West, and North.

They were near the tabernacle, because it was their business to take care of it; to take it down when the camps moved, and to put it up again when they rested. The other tribes pitched their tents farther off. On the East, Issachar, Judah, and Zebulun; on the South, Simeon, Reuben, and Gad; on the West, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Benjamin; and on the North, Naphtali, Dan, and Asher. When the cloud rested, the people rested too; but when the cloud moved, they were all to be ready for their journey.



THE SCAPE-GOAT.

They had lived nearly a year at Mount Sinai; and now the cloud was taken up, and they all began to move. But there was no hurry nor confusion in the camps. All was orderly; every one knew what he had to do. First, the trumpets were sounded, and then the three tribes of the camp of Judah began to march. The tabernacle was taken down by the Levites; the Gershonites carried the curtains, and the Merarites carried the heavy boards and bars, and put them safely into wagons. Then the three tribes of Reuben's camp marched on; the Kohathites followed, carrying the holy vessels of the tabernacle.

Next came Ephraim's camp; and, last of all, the camp of Dan, and all the sick and weak people who were unable to go fast. They journeyed

wherever the cloud led them; and when they began to move, Moses prayed God to go with them; and when they rested, he prayed God to stay with them. They were always under his kind care and keeping, and therefore safe wherever they went.

When we journey, we should ask God to go with us too; and if we stay quietly at home, we should ask him to be with us there. While we live in this world, we have to move often from place to place; it is not our rest; it is not our home; it is like the wilderness where the Israelites wandered so many years. But there is a home above; Heaven is like the pleasant land of Canaan which God promised to give his people.

The Lord now spoke to Moses, and told him to send twelve men, one man from every tribe, to the land of Canaan, which God promised to give to his people Israel. The twelve men were to see if the land was good or bad; if the people there were strong or weak, few or many; and they were to come back again, with some of the fruits of Canaan, to show to the people. The men went away, and came to Hebron, and to a place called Eshcol; and there they found some beautiful vines, covered with fine grapes. They cut down one branch, and put it upon a pole, and two men carried it; it was very heavy, the grapes were so many and so large. They gathered some pomegranates and figs too; and after forty days, the spies came back again to the camp.

All the people wished very much to know what the spies had seen, and to look at the beautiful fruit they had brought. The men said, "The land of Canaan is a very beautiful and fruitful country; full of corn, and vines and honey; but we fear to go there, because the people are many, and they are stronger than we." These men forgot that God was stronger than all, and that he had promised to fight for them, and to give them the land. They had no trust, no faith in their kind God; and they tried to frighten the people, that they might not go to the good land.

But two of the spies were not like the others. Their names were Joshua and Caleb. They trusted in God's promise, and did not fear. They said, "Let us go up, and possess the land; for we are able to overcome it." But the people were frightened, and began to weep; they believed the spies more than they believed God, and forgot to trust to his power.

Then they murmured against Moses and Aaron, and said, "Why did you bring us away from Egypt? We were happier there than here: we wish we had died in the wilderness. Let us choose a captain and

return to Egypt." Caleb and Joshua spoke gently, and tried to quiet them; but the people became more angry, and began to throw stones at Caleb and Joshua, to kill them.

Then they looked up towards the tabernacle, and there they saw the glory of the Lord, and he spoke to Moses with a loud voice. He said he was now tired of his sinful people, and would not let them go to Canaan, but would destroy them in the wilderness. But Moses again prayed for them; he asked God not to forsake the people for whom he had done so many wonderful things; but to forgive them, and spare them still.

RETURN OF THE SPIES FROM CANAAN.

God heard Moses' prayer, and he promised not to destroy the people directly; but he said he could not allow them to go to Canaan, that good land which he had promised to his obedient people. His faithful servants Joshua and Caleb, and those of the Israelites who were now children, should go: but all the others must wander forty years in the wilderness, until they died. Their children would then be grown up, and Joshua and Caleb should go with them to Canaan, without the sinful disobedient parents. The people cried very much when they heard this. It was a great punishment to them. They could never again dwell in a settled home: never see a

pleasant country any more; but they must pass all their lives in the desert wilderness.

The ten men who spoke evil of the land of Canaan, died of the plague before the Lord; but Caleb and Joshua were kept in safety. Then the perverse Israelites, instead of humbly submitting to their punishment, said, "We will go to Canaan, the land God promised to us." Moses warned them; he told them not to go, because God was not with them, and their enemies would come, and fight against them, and kill them; but the people would not attend. They went to the top of the hill; but Moses, and the ark of God, and the blessing of God, did not go with them.

And had they power to take care of themselves? They thought proudly that they had; but soon their enemies, the Amalekites, came down, and smote them, and drove them away.

About this time, while the Israelites were still in the wilderness, another very sad thing happened among them. A man was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. The people who saw him knew how wrong this was; so they took him directly, and brought him to Moses. Moses was very sorry to hear what the man had done; but he did not himself pass sentence upon him. God was the king and judge, and it was his law that had been disobeyed: and therefore Moses went to God, and told him all, and asked what must be done, and how the man must be punished.

And what did God say? Perhaps we might think that the man had committed only a little sin, and that God could not be very angry with him for gathering a few sticks on the Sabbath day. But we must remember God does not look upon sin as we do. He cannot think disobedience to his laws a little sin. The man knew it was wrong to do any work on the Sabbath. He had stood by Mount Sinai on that dreadful day when the Lord came down upon it in fire, to give his commands to the people; and he had heard him say, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work." The man knew, too, that God had commanded the people to light no fire, and to dress no food, on the Sabbath; and that no manna was sent that day, but a double portion the day before, to teach them how very holy the Sabbath was. The man remembered all this, and yet he dared to disobey the command of God. This was not a little sin, but a dreadful

act of rebellion against God; and the punishment of it was dreadful, too. "The Lord said unto Moses, the man shall be surely put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones. And all the congregation stoned him with stones, and he died." Such was his dreadful fate.

This is a sad story. Learn from it how fearful it is to disobey the commands of God: and particularly the command which tells us to keep holy the Sabbath day. Many people break that command, even in this Christian country. Some buy, and sell, and do their daily work on Sunday, as on other days. And others spend the Sabbath in idle conversation and amusements.

PUNISHMENT OF THE SABBATH-BREAKER.

But God has told us not to find our own pleasure, nor to speak our own words, on his holy day; and he is as angry with those who break the Sabbath secretly, at home, and in their own families, as with those who break it openly. These wicked people, perhaps, may escape unpunished for many weeks, and months, and years; but all their sins are known to God, and written down in the book of his remembrance. And if they do not repent, they will surely be punished in another world, for breaking God's holy day here.

Do you love Sunday? Do you love holy duties and holy pleasures

better than any others? If not, you cannot be fit for heaven. The happy people there will spend eternity in praising God. This is their greatest enjoyment: but it would be no enjoyment to you, if you do not like to praise and worship God now. If you do not serve him here, you cannot live with him, and sing his praises hereafter.

Pray to God to give you a new heart, and to make you love him; and then you will love holy things, and holy duties, and holy pleasures, better than all the things of the world. You will be happy while you live; and when you die, you will go to that "rest which remaineth for the people of God."

God told the people that he would now show them whom he had chosen to be his High Priest. He commanded Moses to take twelve rods, and to write upon each of them the name of one of the twelve tribes; and on the rod of the tribe of Levi he was to write Aaron's name, because Aaron was of the tribe of Levi. The rods were dry sticks; there was no life in them. God commanded them all to be put into the tabernacle before the ark; they were to stay there one night, and God promised to make the rod of the man whom he chose to bud and blossom, to bring forth flowers and fruit.

This was a very wonderful thing to do; but Moses did not disbelieve God, for He knew he had power to do what he pleased; and, in faith and obedience, Moses laid up the twelve rods before the Lord. The next morning Moses went into the tabernacle and looked at the rods; eleven of them were still dry and withered; but the rod of Levi, on which Aaron's name was written, was full of buds, and blossoms, and almonds. Moses brought them all out, and called the men to take their rods; and when they saw that Aaron's alone had budded, they knew that God had chosen him to be High Priest.

The Lord told Moses to keep Aaron's rod safely; to put it into the ark, that it might be there always, to show the rebellious people that Aaron was God's chosen minister. The Israelites were obliged now to submit to the Lord. He had punished them for their rebellion; and he had shown them by a miracle, whom he had chosen for his priest, that they might not again speak against Aaron. But nevertheless these people were not humbled; they cried, and said, "We shall die, we shall all perish!"

It is sad when punishment makes sinners angry and rebellious.

God sends it to make them repent and turn to him. He wishes all to be saved; he wants none to perish; and, when people forget him, he sends sorrow to them, to make them remember him; to see if they will confess their sin, and ask for forgiveness. He is ready and waiting to forgive all who come humbly to him; Jesus is willing to save them, and to wash away their sins; the Holy Spirit is willing to come into their hearts, and to make them new and clean.

But if sinners still resist and rebel, God will not wait for ever. He will at last cut them off, and send them away from him to everlasting punishment. Then it will be too late to ask for pardon and salvation; for God will not hear their prayer. We must go to Jesus *now*, and all will be well; for he says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

THE BUDDING OF AARON'S ROD.

When the Israelites had buried Miriam in Kadesh-Barnea, they began to murmur again. There was no water to drink, and they forgot their kind God who so often fed them from Heaven, and would not trust him. They said to Moses and Aaron, "Why did you bring us here to kill us with thirst? We wish we had died with our brethren before the Lord?" Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the door of the tabernacle, and the glory of God appeared to them. He heard their prayer, and he

told them where to go for water, and what they must do. There was a great rock in the wilderness, and God commanded them to go and speak to that rock, and he said he would bring water out of it.

Then Moses took his rod, and he and Aaron called all the people to stand before the rock, to see the wonder that God was going to do. But Moses and Aaron were tired of the rebellion and disobedience of the people, and they became impatient and passionate. This was wrong; they should have asked God to give them meekness, and gentleness, and patience, and to help them to bear with the Israelites. But Moses and Aaron spoke very loudly, and cried to the people, "Hear, ye rebels, must we bring water for you out of the rock?"

MOSES SMITING THE ROCK.

Then Moses smote the rock, and the water came out, and the people and their cattle drank. But God was angry with Moses and Aaron, because they had not obeyed him, and when they came to Mount Hor, he spoke to them again, and told them that they must die, and not go to Canaan, because they had rebelled against him at the rock Meribah. Aaron must die first; his work was ended, but Moses had much to do still. All God's people have work to do; God gives them strength to do it; and when it is finished, he takes them home to their rest.

God commanded Moses, and Aaron, and Eleazer, Aaron's son, to go up to the top of Mount Hor; and there Moses was to take off the holy garments from Aaron, and to put them upon Eleazer, and to make him High Priest instead of Aaron. All three went up; they knew why they went; Aaron knew that he was now going to die, that he should never offer sacrifices, and pray for his people again.

THE DEATH OF AARON.

Aaron knew, too, that he must have a sacrifice offered for him, and that he needed a High Priest to intercede for him; and he had faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the great High Priest, who should come to offer up a sacrifice for all the world —the sacrifice of himself. Aaron's sins had all been taken away, his heart had been made new by the Holy Spirit, and he was ready to die. Moses took off his brother's garments, and put them upon Eleazer; and then Aaron said farewell to Moses, and to his son, and lay down on the mountain, and died. Moses and Eleazer went back alone; and when the Israelites saw that Aaron was dead, they wept for him thirty days. All the people mourned for their high-priest.

After Aaron's death, the people wet to Kibroth-Hataavah, and then to Zalmonah; and they murmured again, because they were tired of their long wanderings, and of the manna which God gave them. They forgot

why it was that they wandered so many years in the wilderness; it was for the punishment of their sin, and they ought humbly to have submitted to it; but their hearts were still proud, and rebellious, and unhumbled before God.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

God now punished his sinful people again. He sent fiery serpents among them; and they bit the people, and many died. God has power over all creatures. He could bring quails to feed his people, and now he could bring serpents to kill them.

The Israelites came to Moses, and confessed their sin and asked him to pray for them to God. Moses was always ready to pray for them, and God was always ready to hear his prayers, and He told Moses how the people must be cured of the serpents' bites. He commanded Moses to make a serpent of brass, and to put it upon a pole; and he said, that all who were bitten, if they looked upon the brazen serpent, should live. The bitten Israelites did as God said, and were cured, and went on their journey again.

We may learn a lesson from the story of the serpents. We are like the bitten Israelites; we are all sick and perishing, not in our bodies, but in our souls. Satan, "the old serpent," destroys the soul, as the fiery serpents destroyed the body. We are all sinners; all in danger of perishing

in sin; but there is a way to escape. What saved the bitten Israelites? They looked upon the serpent of brass and lived.

And what can save us? Jesus says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." He was lifted up upon the cross, to die on it for our sins: and if we look to him in faith he has promised to save us, and to give us eternal life. He himself, when he was upon earth, said to Nicodemus, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

When the Israelites came to Heshbon, they fought with Sihon, king of the Amorites. God had commanded all the Amorites to be slain, because they were wicked idolaters; and he promised to give their possessions to his people Israel. The people were now coming into Canaan, and they pitched near Jericho. Very soon God would give them the land; for the forty years were almost ended, and then they were to go and possess it:—not the rebellious and disobedient; they would all be dead; but their children, who were now growing up, should go, and Caleb and Joshua with them.

There was a country near the land of the Amorites, called Moab: the king's name was Balak. The Moabites heard what Israel had done to the Amorites, and other idolatrous people; and they began to be very much frightened, and thought that perhaps soon they should be destroyed too. These people did not go to God to help them; they did not ask the Israelites to teach them what was right, nor forsake their idols, and their wickedness; but they thought they would try to bring evil upon God's people; for they hated them, and wished their destruction.

There was a prophet, but a wicked prophet, who lived a long way off from Moab, named Balaam. Balak, king of Moab, sent his servants to ask Balaam to come and curse the Israelites; and the servants took money with them to tempt Balaam to go. The messengers went to the wicked prophet, and told him what their king said; and when Balaam saw the money he wished to go with them. He knew that it would be very wicked to curse God's people, and he ought to have sent the servants away directly; but he said to them, "Stay one night, and I will tell you what God shall say to me."

In the night, God came to Balaam, and asked, "Who are these men?" Then the prophet told him who they were and why they came; but God said, "Thou shalt not go; thou shalt not curse my people; for they are blessed." Balaam told the men, in the morning, what God said,

and they went back to their master. But soon after, Balak sent more princes to Balaam, and promised to give him great riches and honors if he would come and curse Israel. Balaam knew he could do nothing without God's leave, so he told the princes that he would ask God again. The Lord saw how rebellious and disobedient Balaam was, and he came to him and said, "If the man call thee, go; but thou shalt speak only what I tell thee."

Then Balaam did not wait to be called, but rose early in the morning, and went with the princes. Balaam wished to go, and God let him have his wish; but God's blessing was not with him. Balaam knew he was displeasing God; he knew it was wrong to go to the enemies of the Lord, and curse his people; he knew God had told him at first not to go, and that he was now disobeying him.

Was Balaam happy? No—he could not be happy; nothing can make us truly happy without God's blessing. When we wish for anything, or wish to go anywhere, we ought to ask ourselves, "Will God be pleased if I do this? Is it his will that I should do so, or that I should go there? because, if it is not, I cannot have his blessing, and then I cannot be happy." We should ask God to go with us, and to be with us wherever we are, and then all will be well.

Balaam rode upon his ass to go to Moab; he thought how he should do as he pleased, and have the money Balak promised him; but God would not give Balaam the power to curse his people; and without God Balaam could do nothing. The angel of the Lord came to stand in the way before the disobedient prophet; but Balaam was not thinking of God, and he did not see the angel. But the ass saw, and turned out of the road for fear, and Balaam beat the ass to turn it back again. Soon after they came to a road through some vineyards, with a wall on both sides; and the ass saw the angel standing with a sword drawn in his hand, and pressed close to the wall, and hurt Balaam's foot, and he beat the ass again.

Then the road became very narrow; the angel stood before, and there was no room to turn, and the ass fell down under Balaam. Then the prophet was very angry, and he beat the poor ass again with his stick; but it was not the ass that was rebellious and disobedient; no, it was the prophet who was so wicked, and so foolish, and the angel was sent to him. Balaam did not see the angel, and therefore he was cruel to the poor ass.

But God has power to do all things, and he did a very wonderful thing then; he opened the mouth of the ass, and enabled it to speak. Animals have not reason, nor the power of speaking, as most of us have; God has not given them these things. He has given them instinct; he teaches them how to find their food, and how to take care of their young. He has made them very useful to man.

BALAAM MEETING THE ANGEL.

What did the ass say? It said, "Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden for many years past? What have I done? Why hast thou smitten me?" Balaam said, "Because thou hast not obeyed me; I wish I had a sword in my hand, for now I would kill thee." But the ass said again, "I have been thine ass a long time; did I ever do so before?" And Balaam answered, "No."

Then God opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel standing before him, with a sword in his hand, and he was very much afraid, and fell down on his face. The angel asked, "Why hast thou smitten the ass these three times? I came out to meet thee, because thou wast rebellious and disobedient, and the ass saw me and turned away. If the ass had not turned away, I should have killed thee, and saved her alive." Then Balaam said, "I have sinned, I did not see thee standing in the way; now then, if thou art displeased,

I will go back again." But the angel said, "No, go with the men to Moab, but speak only what I tell thee."

Then the angel went away, and Balaam went on to Moab. But was he sorry for his disobedience? No, he was frightened, but he was not humbled. He could not now curse Israel with his mouth; for God, who enabled the ass to speak, took away from Balaam the power to say what he wished. But his heart was not changed; he was rebellious and disobedient, and covetous still.

Moses was now a very old man, one hundred and twenty years old. The Israelites were close to Canaan, and soon they were to go there; but Moses must not go with them. He had sinned and disobeyed God at the rock, and his sin must be punished. But God was not angry with Moses now. No: Moses had repented, and he was forgiven, and his soul would go to Heaven. But God must punish his servant in this world; Moses could not go to the good land which God promised to his people. God said to him, "Go unto the mountain Pisgah, and there I will show thee all the land of Canaan; thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither."

Then God told him to take Joshua, and make him the leader of the people, to guide them when Moses was dead. Moses did all God commanded. He took Joshua, and laid his hands upon him, and blessed him; and God gave him his Spirit, and made him wise and holy, that he might know how to command his people in the right way.

Then Moses called all the people together, that he might speak to them for the last time. They were the children who had grown up in the wilderness; the rebellious parents were dead. Moses spoke to them of all those wonders which God had done for them, and for their fathers, for forty years. This last speech of Moses is written in the book of Deuteronomy. He told them all their past history, since they went from Egypt. He reminded them of God's kindness, and of their sins and rebellions, and of all the laws which God had given them; and then, when he had finished, he taught them a beautiful song of praise to God.

The Israelites felt very sad when they heard their friend speak to them for the last time, and give them his dying blessing; and it was sad, too, to Moses to say farewell to those he loved. But he knew they had a friend in Heaven, who would never forsake them if they truly served him; and he told them to love and obey their kind and holy God. Then he

blessed Joshua again, and told him not to fear, because God was with him to strengthen and protect him; and then he and Joshua went together into the tabernacle.

And now God called Moses, and told him that the time was come for him to go up to the mountain, and die. God showed him from the mount all the beautiful country of Canaan, with its hills, and fields, and water, and corn, and vineyards. Moses could not go there; but he was going to a better country, a heavenly one, where is no pain, nor sickness, nor sorrow, nor sin. Moses lay down on the mountain, and died, and the Lord buried him; no man knew where, nor how. Then all the people saw that Moses was dead, and they wept for him in the plains of Moab thirty days.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

While the children of Israel were in the wilderness the Lord gave them various commands concerning offerings. They were to purify themselves when they had committed any sin, and there were other offerings which were simply for purification.

One of these was for women, who at certain times were expected to make some kind of an offering that they might be considered as pure and undefiled. This was commanded by the Lord through Moses, after a child had been born. The mother was to touch no hallowed thing nor come

into the sanctuary until the days of her purifying were fulfilled. After this, she was to bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt-offering, and a young pigeon, or turtle-dove, for a sin-offering. These were to be brought unto the priest at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. He was to take them and offer them before the Lord, and make an atonement for the woman who brought the offerings.

OFFERINGS FOR THE PURIFICATION OF WOMEN.

If she was not able to bring a lamb, then she was to bring two turtle-doves or two young pigeons; the one for a burnt-offering, and the other for a sin-offering. In this way the priest was to make atonement for her, after which she was considered clean and undefiled. The laws concerning offerings were strict, and the Lord gave them to Moses, telling him to command the people to observe them. They were necessary for the children of Israel, that they might be reminded constantly that God was their God, and that no duty, however slight, must be overlooked.

The children of Israel in the wilderness were afflicted with many diseases. One of these was leprosy, which has always been one of the worst diseases and among the hardest to cure. In fact, there is a form of leprosy for which no remedy has ever been found. It is not very common in our days, although in Eastern countries it is sometimes found. Among

the Israelites it was so terrible that a special offering of purification was made for it according to God's command given to Moses.

It showed itself first by a scab or bright spot. Then the person upon whom it appeared had to be brought unto the high priest or unto one of the sons of the priests. If the disease had really made its appearance, the person was pronounced unclean. He had to be separated from the rest of the people; first, for seven days; then, if he had not recovered, seven days more. If the scab, or bright spot, had disappeared, he was pronounced clean, but if the scab spread, he was constantly watched in order that the plague might not spread.

PURIFICATION FOR LEPROSY.

A certain law was given to Moses for the purification of the leper after he had been healed. The priest was to go forth out of the camp and he was to take for the leper, who was to be cleansed, two birds, alive and clean, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. One of the birds was killed in an earthen vessel over running water. The priest took the living bird, the cedar wood, the scarlet and the hissop, and dipped them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water. Then he sprinkled the person that was to be cleansed seven times, pronounced him clean and let the living bird loose into the open field.

The one to be cleansed had to wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water; then it was ten days before he was allowed to come into the camp. Next he was directed to make an offering to show his gratitude for having been healed.

When there was no prospect that the leper would recover he was to be removed outside the camp and live by himself, lonely and desolate, that he might not defile the people. We see what a terrible affliction leprosy was. No one was allowed to come near the person who was suffering from this disease. Only God could cure it, and we read of his doing it in several instances. Once it came suddenly upon the hand of Moses, making it white as snow, and then was taken away again, leaving it as well as before. God sent it upon Moses so that he might show that miracle to the children of Israel in Egypt.

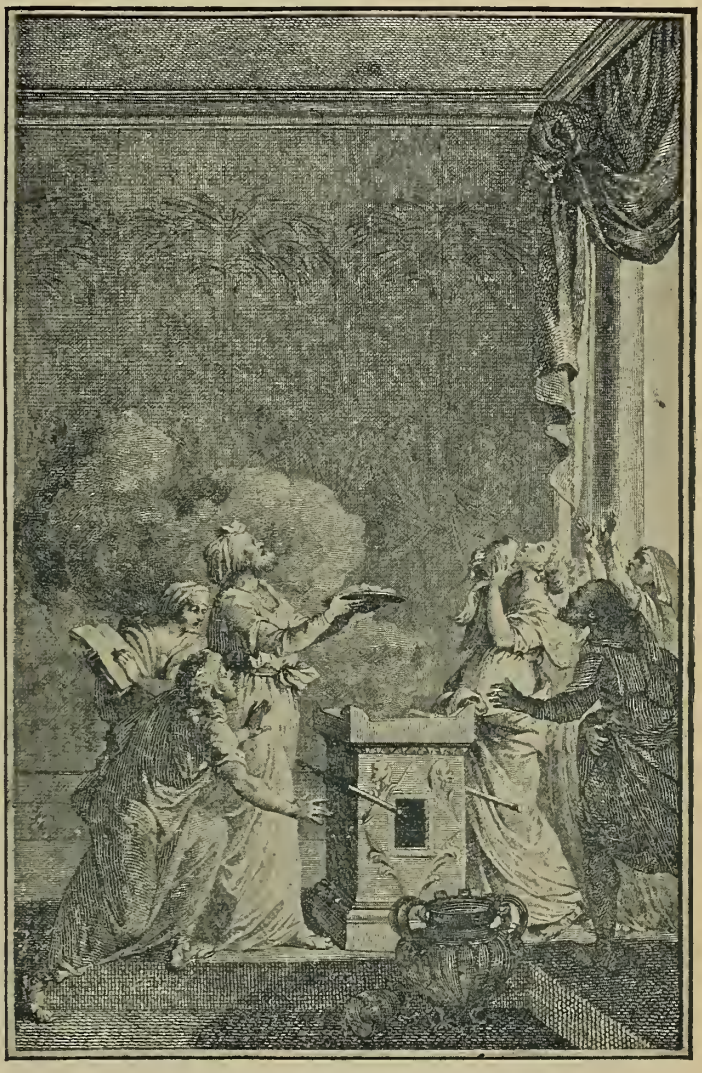
SENDING THE LEPER OUTSIDE THE CAMP.

But this dreadful disease was sometimes sent upon persons for their sins. It was not taken away quickly, but stayed and often spread over their whole bodies. Such persons had to cry, "Unclean!" as a warning to others.

Miriam would never have been cured of this disease except by a miracle. God had sent it upon her as a punishment for wickedness. Aaron begged that Miriam might be healed. And Moses prayed earnestly to the

Lord for her, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. And the Lord heard his prayer and healed her of her leprosy.

The laws concerning marriage and the duties of husbands to wives and wives to husbands, were very rigid among the Israelites; so much so that one offering was appointed for jealousy. If any man's wife went aside and committed a trespass against him, and the spirit of jealousy came upon him, then he was to bring his wife unto the priest. He was also to bring an offering for her, which consisted of barley meal. No oil was to be poured upon it, for it was an offering of jealousy, bringing iniquity to remembrance.



THE JEALOUSY OFFERING.

The priest brought her near and set her before the Lord. Then he took holy water in an earthen vessel and put into it dust scraped from the floor of the tabernacle. He uncovered the woman's head and put the offering of memorial in her hands. If she were guilty of sin, the priest was required to pronounce a curse upon her. She was compelled to drink the bitter water, after which the priest took the jealousy offering, waved it before the Lord and offered it upon the altar.

This seems very strange to us, but it was intended by God to preserve the purity of his people and to show them that they could not vio-

late their duties as husband and wife without suffering punishment and making atonement. A great many observances were required in order to keep the people mindful of God's goodness, and to sanctify them to himself. When Christ came, these old sacrifices were done away with, because he was the one great sacrifice, and there did not need to be any other.

The Lord said that when the Israelites should come into Canaan and live there, and have the land for their own, each man must take the first of the grain, and the first of the fruits, that should grow ripe in his fields, and put them into a basket and bring them to the tabernacle. And the priest at the tabernacle should take the basket out of the man's hand, and set it down before the altar of burnt-offering. Then the man should say, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me.

And there he should worship the Lord. And the man was to leave the basket, with the firstfruits in it, at the tabernacle; and the Lord said these should belong to the priest. For the Lord gave them to the priest, because the priests would have no fields, or orchards, in which to raise grain and fruit for themselves. And the Lord commanded each man among the children of Israel to bring his firstfruits, every year, in this way, as an offering, to the tabernacle.

The people were told that on the day they should go over Jordan into Canaan, they must set up some great stones there and cover them with plaster. And while the plaster was yet soft, they must write on it all the words of the law which God had given them. Then when the plaster grew hard, those words would remain; and every one who passed by could read God's law written upon it.

If the children of Israel would obey the Lord, the Lord would make them greater than any other nation. He would bless their children, their land, and their cattle. Their enemies who should come out against them, would be afraid and flee away before them. And all the other nations of the earth should know that the Lord had chosen them for his people.

But if they would not obey him, they should have great trouble. They would sow much seed in their fields, but reap only a little grain, for the locusts would come and destroy it; they would plant their vines, but should not gather the grapes, for the worms would eat them. They should have sickness such as could not be cured. And the Lord would send against them a fierce nation that would not pity the old or the

young, but would take their cattle and their food, and at last carry them and their children away, as captives, to other lands; where the children of Israel should be slaves to their enemies, and, like their enemies, would worship idols of wood and stone.

## RAHAB AND THE SPIES.

YOU know that the land of Canaan was the land where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had lived, and God had promised them that it should belong to their children's children. At this time there were many nations living in this land; the names of some of them were the Ammonites, the Amorites, the Hivites, the Jebusites, and many others.

God told the Israelites that they were to go to the cities of these people, and if they would let them in, then they might spare their lives and make them their servants, and they should pay tribute or taxes to the Israelites; but if the people would not submit to this, then they were to fight against them and destroy them entirely.

Why was this? Because these nations were exceedingly wicked, therefore God told the Israelites to destroy them. They had gone on from bad to worse, till their sins, like the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, seemed to cry to Heaven for punishment.

It was about April now, and the sun had melted the snows of the Mountains of Lebanon, and these mountain torrents had made the river Jordan, generally small, swell to twice its usual size. The people of Jericho knew this, and they thought that they might rest in peace for some weeks to come, as the Israelites could not cross to fight their city yet.

But very soon after the death of Moses, Joshua had secretly sent two men to Jericho, to spy out the state of the city, and see how they could best get into it. It was a city with a strong wall all round it, and they kept careful watch at the gates, so as to keep out the Israelites.

However, these spies somehow managed to get into the city, and they went to lodge at the house of a woman named Rahab. They had not been there long before they found out that the King of Jericho knew that they had come into the city, and that they had gone into that very house.

The king sent messengers to Rahab, and said to her, "Give up the spies that are in your house, for they have come to search out the country."

Rahab answered, "The men did come here, but I did not know

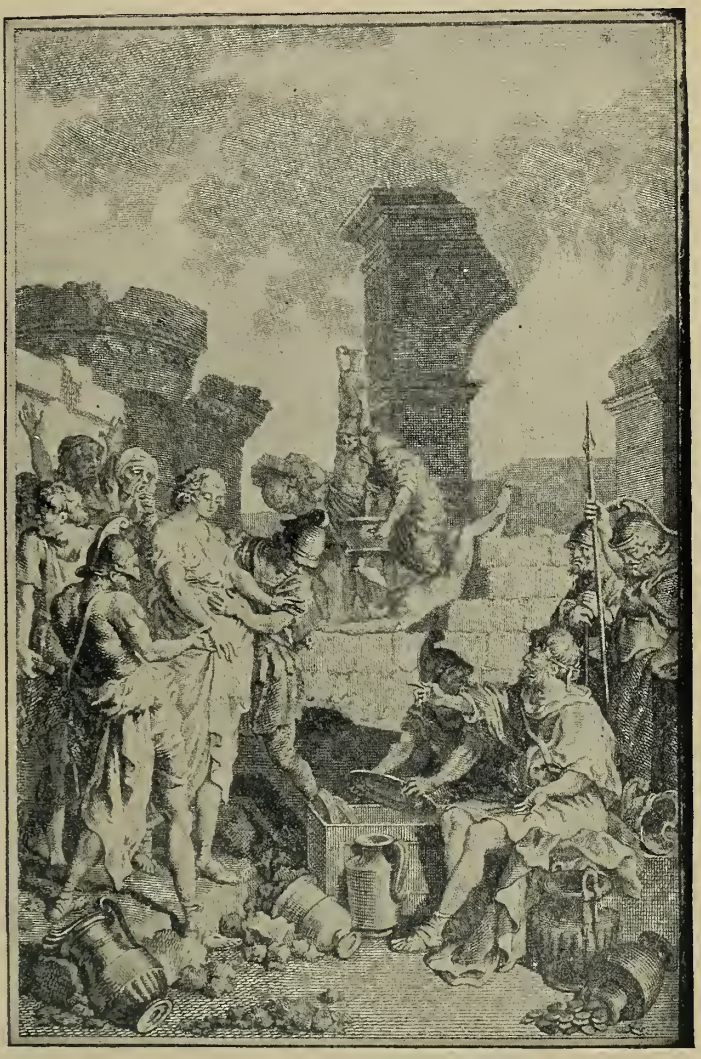
where they came from, and they are not here now. They went away through the city gates just before they were shut at dark. I do not know where they are gone; but if you make haste I think you will overtake them."

So the messengers went away through the city gates, and the gates were shut after them, and they went after the spies, as far as the river Jordan. When they were gone away, Rahab went to the spies, who were still in her house, and said, "I must hide you; come with me to the roof of the house." The roofs of houses in the East are flat, so that people can walk on them. This is the place where, in the cool of the day, the people sit for fresh air, and often in hot summer nights they sleep here. Here, too, they would lay such things as required to be dried by the heat of the sun, and it was here that Rahab had laid out the stalks of her flax to dry.

ESCAPE OF THE SPIES.

These stalks she meant to lay over the men, so that they might be hidden; and that is why she took them to the roof. Before the men lay down she told them the reason why she wanted to save them from the King of Jericho. She said, "I know that the Lord has given you this land, and all the people who dwell in the land are afraid because of you. We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when you came out of

Egypt; we have heard how you have overcome all your enemies on the other side of Jordan. I know, too, that God will give you the city, and I want you to promise me that you will save me and all my relations alive when you take the city, even as I have saved you alive by not giving you up to the messengers."



RAHAB SAVED AND ALL HER POSSESSIONS.

The spies said, "We promise faithfully to do as you say, if you will keep our secret, and tell no one that we have been here. Here is a piece of scarlet cloth: you must hang this in your window, so that we may know your house again. We will deal truly and kindly with all who are in this house; so you must bring your relations here, for if any of them are in any other house, we cannot save them, and the fault will be their own."

The woman said, "It shall be as you say," and she put the scarlet cloth in her window. Then she let the men down by a cord through the window, for her house was upon the town wall, and they reached the ground outside the wall. Then they went and hid themselves in the mountains for three days, until the men who went to look for them returned to Jericho.

So then these spies at last got back to Joshua, and said, "We shall be able to take the city, for all the people are afraid of us, and the Lord will deliver them into our hands."

But perhaps you will ask, "Did not Rahab tell a lie?" Yes, she did, and it was very wrong of her to do so. But we must pity her; for as she was a poor heathen woman, she did not know, as you do, how wicked it is to say the least thing that is not true. Afterwards, when the children of Israel captured Jericho, Rahab was saved and all her possessions. This heathen woman who befriended the Israelites escaped the destruction that came upon the city.

## THE ISRAELITES PASS OVER JORDAN.

GOD now commanded Joshua to take possession of the land which he promised that Israel should inherit; and he told him to be of good courage, and only to mind the holy law and obey it, and he should be sure to prosper.

Joshua then gave orders to the officers of the people to provide victuals for marching; and he desired the Reubenites and Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, who had already got their possessions, to join their brethren and assist in taking the land, which they honorably agreed to do, as they had before promised.

Joshua came to Jordan with all Israel, and after three days the officers went through the host, and desired them to follow the ark of the covenant, which the Levites should carry before them. This ark was a sign of God's presence amongst them, and that he was their chief guide. They were to keep at the distance of two thousand cubits, or arms'-lengths from the elbow to the end of the middle finger, so that they might treat the ark with reverence, by not crowding upon it, and that they might see it better than they could if they were all thronging near it.

So the day following, the priests and the Levites "took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people." And God told Joshua that he would now honor him by a wonderful miracle, which should show Israel that he had chosen him to lead Israel, as he had before chosen Moses.

And Joshua told Israel what God would do for them, and that, as soon as the priests who bore the ark should touch the brink of the river with their feet, the waters of Jordan should stand upon an heap on one side, so as not to flow down their channel; while those on the other side should continue running without any fresh supply; and so the bed, or bottom of the river, should be dry for Israel to pass over, as the Red Sea

had before been for their fathers with Moses. Joshua also ordered twelve men to be selected, perhaps to go near and witness this miracle, for the entire satisfaction of the rest.

So the priests moved forward and stood in Jordan; and the waters dried up as Joshua had foretold, although this happened at the time of harvest, when the river overflowed its banks, from the great quantity of water; which made the miracle the more wonderful. "And all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan."

THE ARK PASSING OVER JORDAN.

The number of the Israelites at this time was six hundred thousand men besides women and children, which was, indeed, a vast army; yet it is wonderful that the Canaanites did not watch them, and try to stop their crossing of Jordan. But perhaps they thought they could not pass the river where they did; and if they saw that the waters yielded to make way for them, it was quite enough to frighten them, alarmed as they already were, and to make them run away, wherever they could, for safety.

The passing of Jordan was a great event, and Joshua, therefore, commanded twelve men, one from each tribe, and probably the same men spoken of before, to take twelve stones from the spot where the priests'

feet had stood, and to carry them to their first lodging-place over Jordan, where they were to leave them. And so, when at any future time their children should ask, "What mean you by these stones?" they should be told, "that the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, when it passed over Jordan, and that the stones were a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever."

THE ANGEL APPEARING TO JOSHUA.

The drying up of Jordan must have been seen for some miles, and the news of the wonderful event, with the passage of the Israelites, soon spread among the Canaanites, and filled them with the greatest alarm, "neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel."

And God now commanded Joshua to mark the Israelites of the new generation with the sign of his covenant with them, and they kept a solemn passover, which they had been denied in their wanderings in the wilderness. The country people naturally fled away from the invading armies, and all their corn in the field and in store became the property of the Israelites, who took it and fed upon it, as part of their promised possession, given them by that God who caused it to grow; and having no more need of manna, that miraculous supply of food ceased, and "they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year."

Next, we have an account of a wonderful appearance to Joshua. The person who appeared to him while he was, perhaps, thoughtfully looking around Jericho, and contriving how to take it, was no common being, or he would not have worshipped him; and from the command to take off his shoes, which was an act of reverence, it was that Angel who appeared in the burning bush to Moses. He now told Joshua that he had come as Captain of the Lord's host, and Joshua might well be encouraged with the assurance that God would fight for him, and give him the promised land for his people.

When the people of Jericho saw the armies of Israel coming they shut up the strong gates of their city; but though this would have preserved them from usual danger, yet now that God had given them up to Israel, nothing could save them. But the city was to be taken in a very wonderful way, to show that, after all, the hand of God was in it.

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERICHO.

Joshua had no orders to batter it, or scale its walls. The men of war were only to march round it once a day for six days; and the ark was to be carried round, and seven priests were to march before it, blowing seven trumpets of rams'-horns. And on the seventh day they were to walk round the city seven times, and the priests were to blow with their trumpets: and at a long blast of

the trumpets, the people were to make a loud shouting, when the wall of the city should fall down flat, and every man could get in without difficulty.

So the armed men went before the priests that blew the trumpets, and a number of people followed the ark, and they marched round the city daily till the seventh day. Then Joshua gave the word, "Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city." And he commanded that everything should be destroyed in the city, except Rahab and her family, and the valuable metals that might be found, which were to be preserved for sacred uses.

JOSHUA COMMANDING THE SUN TO STAND STILL.

And when the people shouted, down fell the wall, and then the Israelites marched in, "and they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword."

The city was also burnt with fire, but Rahab and her family were, by order of Joshua, saved by the spies, who took them out of the camp, and she ever after lived with the Israelites.

The people of Gibeon united with Israel; then Adonizedek, who was the king of Jerusalem, "sent to Hoham, king of Hebron, and unto Piram, king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia, king of Lachish, and unto Debir, king of Eglon, saying, Come up unto me and help me, that we may smite Gibeon; for it hath made peace with Joshua, and with the children of Israel."

So the kings united with Adonizedek, and marched against Gibeon. And when the people saw so great an army against them, they were again in a fright, and they sent off to Joshua with all speed, saying, "Come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us."

Now, as Joshua had given his word, he would not kill the Gibeonites; and he would not, if he could help it, let others kill them. So he marched all night to Gibeon, with all his army, and God told him to fear nothing. And he fell upon the five kings, and they being surprised, fled on every side, and Joshua pursued them. And God made it hail, and the storm fell upon them, and the stones were so large and came down with such a force that "they were more which died with hailstones, than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."

The battle, probably, began very early in the morning, and Joshua chased the five kings till the evening. And now the sun and moon were both in sight: the sun was setting and the moon rising. But Joshua had not destroyed all his enemies, and he spoke to the Lord before Israel, that the sun might stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, over which they both seemed to shine, and so, by the day and the light holding out longer, he might completely defeat his foes. "And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies."

Thus was Joshua highly honored before all the people; and God showed to the heathen how foolish they were to worship the sun and moon, which they did, when he who made them could do as he pleased with them against themselves, and was alone worthy to be adored.

## STORY OF THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL.

GOD sent Jabin king of Canaan to fight against Israel, and conquer them. He was very cruel, and they suffered much under his power for twenty years. God did not fight for them then because they had rebelled, and made him turn away from them. The Israelites felt this; and they remembered their sins, and repented and cried to the Lord to forgive and help them. And did God attend to these rebellious people? Yes, for he is so merciful that he never sends away any who humbly pray to him.

There was a very good woman living at that time, named Deborah.

She dwelt under the palm tree between Ramah and Bethel; and there she prayed, and sang praises to God, and talked to and taught all the people who came to see her. She was a very wise woman; God had given her the best wisdom, the knowledge of himself; and he taught her to prophesy; and to know the future, that she might tell the Israelites what they must do, and how they could be delivered from their cruel enemy, Jabin.

SISERA SLAIN BY JAEL.

When the Israelites began to cry to God, Deborah, at his command, sent for a brave man, named Barak, and said to him, "Go now, and call men out of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, and take them to fight against Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army; for God promises to give us the victory." Then Barak said, "If thou wilt go with me, I will go;" so Deborah went with him and 10,000 men to fight against Sisera. But Deborah told Barak, that he should not kill Sisera, but that God would give the wicked captain into the hands of a woman. So Barak and his army went and fought against Sisera; and soon the Israelites had the victory, because God was with them. Then Sisera came down from his chariot, and ran away on his feet to escape from Barak. There was a man named Heber who was at peace with Jabin; and Sisera ran to Heber's tent for safety. The name of the man's

wife was Jael. When Jael saw Sisera coming, she went out to meet him, and said, "Come in, come in, fear not." So Sisera came in, and lay down; and she covered him with a mantle.

Then he asked for water to drink; and she gave him milk, and he drank, and lay down again. Then he said, "Stand by the door, and if any one ask if I am here, say, No." Sisera was soon asleep, for he was weary with fighting and running so far; and then Jael went very softly, and took a large nail, and a hammer, and hammered the nail into Sisera's head and down into the ground, while he slept, and killed him. Soon after, Barak came to the door of the tent, and Jael called him in, and showed him his enemy lying dead upon the ground.

CALEB GIVING HIS DAUGHTER TO OTHNIEL.

Barak and Deborah felt that it was the Lord, not themselves, nor their soldiers, who had gained the victory, and they sang a beautiful song of praise to him. How glad the Israelites were to be in peace again! War is a sad thing. If we live in a peaceful country, let us thank God for it; because it is he who gives us peace, as well as all our other mercies.

One of the judges of Israel was Othniel. This man was warlike, and was a noted conqueror. We have read of Caleb, who was one of the spies sent to Canaan when the Israelites were in the wilderness.

Caleb was a man of excellent character, on account of which he was permitted to enter the promised land. Caleb promised that any one who should smite and capture Kirjathsepher should have his daughter for his wife. When Othniel gained the victory, Caleb made his word good, and his daughter Achsa became the wife of this judge in Israel.

GIDEON OFFERING SACRIFICE.

The Israelites again forgot the Lord, and as a punishment were given over to the Midianites, from fear of whom they fled to mountains, caves, and other secret places. In their trouble they remembered the Lord whom they had forsaken, and cried and prayed to him for help, and God heard them, as he had often done before. He sent a prophet to them promising that he would help them. There was at that time, in a place named Ophrah, a young man of great valor, Gideon, the son of Joash. While he was threshing wheat, intending to hide it from the Midianites, an angel came and sat under an oak-tree near him. The angel said to Gideon, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor."

The young man asked, if the Lord was with his people, why did they suffer so much from the Midianites? and was told that he would be sent to save Israel. Gideon found it hard to believe this, for his family were poor, and he was the least in his father's house. Gideon fetched food,

a kid and some cakes, and offered them to the angel, who told him to place them upon a piece of rock, and showed his power by touching with his staff the food, and fire came from the rock, and then Gideon knew that he was an angel of the Lord, and built an altar on the spot where he had appeared.

By command of the Lord, Gideon threw down an altar which his father had built to Baal, the false god, and cut down the grove by it where the people worshipped the idol. After that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he sent to the men of the tribes to come to him. He sought a sign from God to know if he was doing right. He put a fleece of wool upon the floor, and said that, if in the morning the dew was on the fleece only and all the ground about was dry, he should know that God would save Israel by his hand.

GIDEON AND HIS FLEECE.

In the morning he found that the fleece was so wet that he could wring out a bowlful of water. To make sure that he had not been mistaken, he asked the Lord to give him another sign. He would again spread out the fleece, and if it remained dry, and there was dew on the ground around, he would know that the Lord was with him. In the morning "it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground."

Gideon and the Israelites made ready to meet the Midianites, in the valley by the hill of Moreh. The Lord knew that the people were vain, and if the Midianites were beaten, would take the glory to themselves, as there were more than thirty thousand of them, and he told Gideon to proclaim that whosoever was fearful and afraid might go away. Twenty-two thousand went away, leaving only ten thousand under brave Gideon to fight the Midianites. But they were too many, and the Lord told Gideon to take them to the river, and notice how they drank. Three hundred lapped the water as a dog laps, the others knelt down to drink. We read that then "the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place."

GIDEON AND HIS LITTLE ARMY.

There were then only three hundred men to stand by Gideon against the Midianites, who were "like grasshoppers for multitude, and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seaside for multitude." But the Lord had told Gideon that they were delivered into his hand, and he divided his small army of three hundred into three companies. Each man had a trumpet and a lamp hidden in a pitcher. In the night they went close to the camp of the Midianites, and suddenly blew their

trumpets, and, breaking the pitchers, showed their lights, shouting loudly, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." The Midianites were struck with sudden fear, and fled, being followed by the Israelites, who killed many.

Afterwards Gideon fought with and took the two kings of Midian, and destroyed the cities of Succoth and Penuel. The people of Israel wished Gideon to rule over them as their king, and after him his son and his son's son, for, said they, "thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian." But he would not, for, he said, the Lord should rule over them. The enemies whom they had killed wore golden earrings, and Gideon asked that they should be given to him. There were so many of these ornaments which had been taken from the dead Midianites that they were of the value of a thousand and seven hundred shekels, or about three thousand pounds of our money.

GIDEON DEFEATING THE MIDIANITES.

There were also ornaments and collars, and purple robes, that the kings of Midian had worn, besides chains that were about the necks of the camels. Gideon made of them a splendid ephod or robe, adorned with gold and precious stones, to be worn by the high priests, and kept it in Ophrah, where, we are told, "it became a snare unto Gideon and to his house," for the foolish Israelites, forgetting again the power of the Lord, worshipped this fine robe, with

its gold and its jewels, and, perhaps, tempted even Gideon and his family to think too much of the beautiful and costly ephod.

Gideon was a wise and able ruler, as well as a brave soldier. The country was in quietness under him for forty years, and he died at a good old age, and was buried in the grave of his father in Ophrah. After his death, the people once more became idolaters, and made the idol, Baal-berith, their god. The Lord was forgotten, and the brave and wise Gideon too; for we read in the Bible, "The children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side; neither showed they kindness to the house of Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had showed unto Israel." So easily did the Israelites forget what the prophet Moses had taught, and what Joshua on his deathbed had bidden them remember—the power of the Lord and the blessings he had promised to his faithful people.

Gideon had seventy-one sons, and after his death one of them, Abimelech, having persuaded the people of Shechem that his brothers would all be kings over them, and it would be better they should choose him, by their help killed all his brothers, except the youngest, Jotham, who hid himself. Having been made king, Abimelech reigned three years, and after that time the men of Shechem rebelled against him, and there was fierce fighting, in which Abimelech was killed.

He was, with his soldiers, about to set fire to a tower, in which were many people, when a woman threw down a millstone which struck him on the head, and, as he thought it would be a disgrace for a king and a brave warrior to be killed by a woman, he ordered one of his young men to slay him with his sword.

There was another famous ruler over Israel, Jephthah, a Gileadite, and mighty man of valor. When the people of Ammon made war against Israel, the Gileadites wished him to be their leader. In his youth Jephthah had been ill-treated by the people, and he asked them if, now that they wanted his help, they would choose him to be their head. They promised that they would, and, having been made captain, he sent to the king of Ammon a message, saying that the land had been given by the Lord to the Israelites, and that therefore he could not possess it, and did wrong to make war against the Gileadites.

But the king would not listen to his words. Jephthah then made a solemn vow that, if the Lord would give him the victory, he would sacri-

fice the first living thing that came out of his house to meet him on his return. There was a great battle and the Ammonites were beaten, Jephthah and the Gileadites gaining a victory, and destroying twenty cities.

The people of Gilead were full of joy when their brave captain returned, and as he came near to his house at Mizpeh, his daughter, his only child, ran out to meet him, playing on the timbrel, and dancing in her joy to see her father again.

JEPHTHAH MEETING HIS DAUGHTER.

But the sight of her brought sorrow to her father. He remembered the vow he had made, and his dear daughter was the first living thing that came out of his house to meet him. Full of grief he told her that he had made a vow unto the Lord, which he must keep. The good and obedient girl was ready to die rather than her father should break his vow, and only asked that she might have two months for prayer and serious thought before she was slain. She went with her young companions into the mountains, and at the end of two months came back, and her father killed her and made of her a burnt offering as he had vowed to the Lord he would. For many, many years afterwards, the young girls of Israel lamented the fate of Jephthah's daughter, setting apart four days every year for mourning.

There were other Judges of Israel after Jephthah—Ibzan, Elon, and

Abdon; but they could not keep the people from idolatry, and for forty years they were, for punishment, subject to the Philistines. In that time of trouble, there was a man of the family of the Danites, named Manoah. He had been married many years, but had no children. An angel appeared to his wife, and promised her, as before angels had promised Sarah, the wife of Abraham, that she should have a son.

MANOAH OFFERING SACRIFICE.

But she must not drink wine or any strong drink, and when the child was born his head must not be shaved, for he would be a Nazarite unto God. The Nazarites were certain persons who were set apart for the service of God, and made vows, that they would never drink strong drink or shave their heads as other Jews did. They were looked upon as holy to the Lord.

The angel came again, and then the woman called her husband Manoah, who, not knowing that the stranger was an angel, offered to roast a kid that he might have food. The angel told him that he would not eat, but that Manoah should make a burnt offering to the Lord. He did so, and, as the fire went upwards, the angel ascended in the flame, and they saw him no more. Then the man and woman knew that they had seen an angel, and fell on their faces in fear.

Manoah thought that they would surely die, because they had seen

God, but his wife, who had greater faith in his love, said, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would have told us such things as these."

When the child was born he was named Samson, which means, in Hebrew, "Hear the second time," because the angel came twice, and twice told his mother what she should do. As he grew up the Lord blessed him, and the Spirit of God came to him. He was very strong, stronger than any young man in Israel, or than had ever been known. When he was a man, he wished to marry a Philistine woman, which grieved his parents, for the Philistines were their hard masters, and they wished their son to marry one of their own people.

SAMSON SLAYING A LION.

Samson, however, was firm, and his father and mother gave way to him and went with him to Timnath, where the young Philistine woman lived. On their way there, Samson met a young lion which would have killed him, but so strong was he, that he seized and "rent it as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand." He did not tell his father and mother what he had done, but soon afterwards came back to the place where the dead lion was, and he found that a swarm of bees

were, with their honey, in the body of the lion. He took the honey, ate some, and gave the rest of it to his father and mother, but did not tell them where he had found it.

Samson married, and at the feast there was a great company, and Samson said he would ask them a riddle, and if they could find it out in a week from that time, he would give them thirty sheets and thirty changes of garments; but if they could not find it out, they should give the same to him. The riddle was, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." They could not find out what was meant, and persuaded Samson's wife to try to make him tell her the answer, threatening that if she did not, they would burn her father's house.

She went to Samson weeping, and told him he did not love her if he would not tell her what the meaning of the riddle was. He refused, saying he had not even told his father and his mother, and he would not tell her. But on the seventh day of the feast, he could not bear any longer to see her in grief, and told her about the honey in the body of the lion, and she directly let her people know what the answer was. They came to Samson and told him, and then he knew that his wife had deceived him, and in his anger slew thirty men of Ashkelon, took their garments and gave them to those who had answered the riddle; and then, leaving his wife behind him, went back to his father's house.

Some time afterwards he desired to make up the quarrel, and returned with a present for his wife, but found that she had been given in marriage to another, and in his anger, he caught three hundred foxes, tied them in couples, tail to tail, with a firebrand between the tails, and let them loose among the corn of the Philistines, which was burnt up, as were the vines and the olives. When it was found that Samson had done this because of the treatment he had received from his wife and her father, the Philistines burned them both. But Samson came again, and "smote them with great slaughter," and then went and dwelt on the top of the rock Etam.

The Philistines were determined to destroy Samson if they could, and they sent an army into Judah, saying that they had come to bind Samson and to do to him as he had done to them. The people of Judah were afraid of the Philistines, and three thousand of them went to the top of the rock where Samson was, asked him if he did not know that the Philistines were their masters, and said they were come to bind him that they might give him up to them. Samson said, "Swear unto me, that

you will not fall upon me yourselves." They answered, "No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee."

And they bound him with two new cords, and took him towards the Philistines, who shouted with joy when they saw the strong man, their famous enemy who had done such terrible things, about to be given up to them. But they were too hasty in their joy, for Samson put out his strength, burst the new ropes as easily as if they had been rotten threads, and leaped forward a free man. He had no sword or other weapon; but lying near him was the jawbone of an ass, and, seizing it, he rushed among the Philistines, and slew a thousand men with it.

SAMSON SLAYING THE PHILISTINES.

After this no man dared come against Samson. He was chosen Judge of the people, and for twenty years ruled them. The Philistines would have killed him, but they all feared to attack him openly, and waited for a chance of seizing him unawares. They thought they had secured him at a town named Gaza, where he stayed one night, and lay in wait to attack him in the morning, having locked and barred the gates, so that they thought he could not pass out. Samson, however, knew of their plans, and at midnight pulled up the posts of the

gates, and carried them, with the heavy doors and the bars, to the top of a hill near Hebron.

This great effort of strength made the Philistines hate and fear Samson all the more, and they determined to find out the secret of his strength, and kill him if they could. He loved a woman named Delilah, and the Philistines gained her over to help them, for she was a bad woman. She agreed to try to persuade Samson to tell her what made him so strong, and what there was that could bind him so that he could not help himself.

Samson thought she was trying to deceive him, and told her that if he were bound with seven green withes (thin twigs of willow) that had never been dried, he should be as weak as any other man. She bound him tightly with them, and, armed men being ready to kill him, Delilah called to him, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson." In a moment he broke the withes, "as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire," and we know how easily that breaks. Delilah pretended to be angry and sorry that Samson had deceived her, and again asked him to tell her truly how he could be bound securely.

Still he would not trust her, but said if he were bound with new ropes that had never been used he would be weak. We suppose the woman had never heard how he snapped the ropes by which he was tied on the rock Etam, or she would not have trusted to ropes to weaken him. She tied him and again called out that the Philistines were upon him. Again he broke them as if they were thread, and again the Philistines who were lying in wait were disappointed.

Once more Delilah tried to make Samson tell her the secret of his great strength, and once more he deceived her. Like other women of the time she wove her own garments, and he told her that if she wove his seven locks of hair with the web of her work his strength would go from him. She did so, but when awoke by her cry that the Philistines were upon him, he sprang up, carrying with him the web and a part of the loom.

Day after day did she ask him to tell her the truth about his strength, and at length "his soul was vexed unto death," and, to quiet her, he told her his secret, that, being a Nazarite, his head had never been shaved, and that if his hair were taken off, he should lose the strength the Lord had given him, and be as weak as any other man. Delilah knew by his manner that now he was telling the truth, and sent to the

Philistine lords a message to come up this once, for, said she, "he hath shown me all his heart." They came as she wished and gave her money for her wicked, deceitful conduct.

When Samson was asleep, she brought in a man who shaved the seven locks of hair from his head. It was well for him, and for Delilah too, perhaps, that Samson did not wake too soon; but when he did wake he felt that he was weak, that the Lord had departed from him, and the Philistines running in, made him a prisoner, and took away in triumph the famous Samson who had been so terrible to them.

CUTTING OFF SAMSON'S LOCKS.

Very cruelly they treated him. A few days before, a thousand would have fled in terror if they had seen Samson near them. Now they put out his eyes, and fearing that the poor blind man, no longer strong, no longer mighty by the favor of the Lord, might recover his power, loaded him with fetters and chains of brass, and set him to grind wheat in the prison. They knew not that, by keeping him there, they were giving him time to regain his strength, for his hair grew again, and with his hair came back his old power.

It was a great time of rejoicing for the Philistines. They made a great sacrifice to their false god Dagon, for they said that he had given

Samson their enemy into their hands. They believed that the senseless image which they worshipped had power over man, and did not know that it was the God of Israel who had punished the foolish conduct of Samson in telling the secret of his strength. They feasted and made merry, and at length the people called out for Samson to be brought out of the prison that he might make sport for them. They wanted to be amused by seeing the man who had been so strong, now blind and feeble, groping about in the dark and fearing to fall. They put him between the pillars which supported the house, and a lad who held him guided his hands so that he could lay hold of them.

SAMSON DESTROYING THE TEMPLE.

It was a large house or temple where they were, and was full of people, and upon the roof were about three thousand men and women. They stood laughing and shouting. They saw Samson's lips move, and made merry at what they thought were his attempts to speak, but he was praying to the Lord: "O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes."

He held the pillars firmly, and saying, "Let me die with the Philistines," bent forward with all his might. The wonderful strength, such

as no man has had before or since, came back to him; the great pillars bent, the house fell in a heap of ruins, burying all that were in it and on the roof, and among them was Samson, the mighty man of Israel, the blind man, who was more terrible in his death than in his life.

The brothers and relations of Samson, when they heard of his death, went to fetch his body. The Philistines were, perhaps, so struck with terror by the terrible vengeance which Samson had taken, and with the loss of so many of their own people, that they made no objection to the dead body of Samson being taken away. What a sight must the relatives of Samson have seen when they reached the place, and searched among the ruins of the fallen house for his body! They took him back to his own place and buried him in the burying-place of his father Manoah, for the Hebrew people always wished to be buried in family graves.

BENJAMITES TAKING WIVES FROM SHILOH.

For twenty years Samson, the strong man, was judge of Israel. After his death, Micah, who was an idolater, was a great man in Israel, and there was much wickedness in the land, and fighting.

The Benjamites were engaged in war and were reduced to a state of desolation. So much so that they were unable to provide wives for themselves. Having gained a victory over their enemies, they came upon

Shiloh when the daughters of Shiloh were dancing, took them by surprise, and carried away four hundred. Then they departed to their own families, and thus disobeyed the Lord by mingling with the surrounding nations.

## RUTH AND NAOMI.

IN the days when the judges ruled in Israel, there came a great famine in the land. And a man named Elimelech left Bethlehem-Judah and went to live in the country of Moab. And he took his wife Naomi and his two sons with him. Elimelech died soon after he came to the land of Moab, and Naomi was left a widow. Her two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, married Moabitish women; the name of one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. In less than ten years the two sons died, and Naomi made up her mind to leave the land of Moab and return to Canaan, for she had heard there was plenty of food there.

When she set out to return to the land of Judah, to whose tribe she belonged, her two daughters-in-law went with her, for they were very fond of her. But Naomi begged them to return to their own mothers, and said, May the Lord repay you for your kindness to me and to my dead sons. And with many kind wishes she kissed them, and they embraced each other.

Orpah and Ruth were still loath to leave Naomi, and clung to her most affectionately. She urged them to return to their relatives and friends, for if they went with her they would have to endure great poverty and hardship. Orpah decided at last that she would return, and parted affectionately from her mother-in-law. Naomi begged Ruth to follow her sister-in-law. But Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to cease following thee: for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also (that is, make my afflictions even greater than yours) if aught but death part thee and me.

When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said no more, and the two walked on until they came to Bethlehem, where Naomi had formerly lived. As soon as they entered the place all her old friends gathered about her and said, Is this Naomi? She said to them, Call me not Naomi (which means *pleasant*), but call me Mara (which

means *bitter*), for the Lord hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty. When she went away she had a husband and children; but now she returned alone.

Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem in the beginning of the barley harvest. And Ruth begged that she might go and glean in the field, for she looked forward to a life of hard work and mean fare. Naomi said, Go, my daughter. And Ruth followed after the reapers and picked up the grain they left behind for the poor to gather.

NAOMI RETURNING TO BETHLEHEM.

Now it happened that the field where Ruth gleaned belonged to a rich man named Boaz, who was related to Elimelech. When Boaz came where his reapers were he said to them, The Lord be with you. They answered him, The Lord bless thee. And when Boaz saw Ruth he asked who she was. And the chief servant who was set over the reapers told him that she was the young woman who came from Moab with Naomi. She begged that she might glean after the reapers, he said, and we allowed her to do so, and she hath kept on gleaning from the morning until now.

Then Boaz showed kindness to Ruth, and told her to go to no other field, but to glean in his, for he had told his young men to do her no harm. And when she was thirsty she was to go to the vessels the

young men had filled, and drink. Then she fell on her face and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?

And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

RUTH GLEANING IN THE FIELD OF BOAZ.

And Boaz told her to eat with the reapers. So she ate with the reapers of bread dipped in vinegar, and Boaz handed her the parched corn, and she ate as much as she desired. Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not; and let fall some handfuls of grain on purpose for her.

So she gleaned in the field unto even, and beat out the barley she had gathered. And when Naomi saw what she had brought, she blessed Ruth, and asked her where she had gleaned, and who had been so kind to her. Ruth said the man's name was Boaz. And Ruth told Naomi that

Boaz had asked her to come back and glean in his field as long as the barley and wheat harvest lasted; and she did as he told her.

Then Naomi said to Ruth, Boaz winnoweth barley to-night in the threshing-floor. The threshing-floor was a large circle of level ground, prepared for use by beating the earth until it was hard as a floor. The sheaves were brought in from the field and spread out upon this floor; and the grain was trodden out by oxen, cows, and young cattle. Then it was tossed up in the air with pitchforks, and the wind blew away the broken straw and chaff, and the barley or wheat fell to the ground. Naomi had heard that Boaz was to thresh his barley that night, and she told Ruth to wash and anoint herself, and put her raiment on, and go down to the threshing-floor, and do as she had told her. And Ruth did as her mother-in-law said.

BOAZ BUYING THE PARCEL OF LAND.

After the work was done, a feast was spread, and when Boaz had eaten and drunk enough he lay down to sleep with a thankful heart. When he was alone Ruth drew near him, saying, Thou art our near kinsman. And she asked him to be kind to her. Boaz said, May the Lord bless thee, my daughter. And he told her to fear not, for all the people of Bethlehem knew that she was a good woman. He said to her, Bring here thy veil and hold it out

And he poured into it six measures of barley, and she took it home with her. And when she showed it to Naomi, and told her all that had happened, Naomi told her to wait patiently and see what else Boaz would do.

After Ruth had left him, Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there. The gate was a place where the people met to learn the news of the day, and to talk with each other. The rulers came there to hold their court, to try those who had broken the laws, and to decide in what way they were to be punished. Goods were also bought and sold there, making it a kind of market-place; and there the priests spoke to the people and the prophets warned them.

And he took ten men of the elders, or chief men of the city, and said to them, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. And he spoke to them and to all the people, and told them that he was going to marry Ruth, the daughter-in-law of Naomi. And he said, You are witnesses. They had heard him tell it, and could tell it to others. And the people and the elders said, We are witnesses; and they prayed that the Lord would bless Ruth, and make Boaz still more prosperous and famous in Bethlehem.

So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife. And Naomi was glad, for she loved Ruth as if she had been her own daughter. And God gave Boaz and Ruth a son, and Naomi took the child and laid it on her breast, and nursed it for them. And they named the child Obed.

## SAMUEL AND ELI.

THERE was a man named Elkanah, who lived at Mount Ephraim. He worshipped the true God, and every year went with his family to sacrifice to the Lord at Shiloh. Elkanah had a wife named Hannah, and she loved God too. Was Hannah happy? One thing made her sorry: she had no child, and she wished very much to have a son.

One year, when Elkanah and his family went to Shiloh, Hannah felt very sad, and she determined to tell her sorrow to God. So when the sacrifice was ended at Shiloh, Hannah went and prayed to the Lord. She cried very much when she prayed, and vowed a vow, and said, "If thou, Lord, wilt give me a son, I will bring him up for thy service. He shall be a Nazarite to thee all his life." Hannah was not alone when she prayed; the old priest was sitting by; his name was Eli. Eli looked at

Hannah while she was praying, and he saw her lips moving, but he could not hear what she said, and he spoke unkindly to her, and asked her what she was doing. Hannah told the priest that she was unhappy, and that she was telling God all her sorrows, and asking him to comfort her. Eli was very glad to find that Hannah prayed with her heart, and not with her lips alone; and he blessed her, and asked God to hear her prayer. Then Hannah thanked Eli, and wiped away her tears, and went home with her husband.

HANNAH BRINGING SAMUEL TO ELI.

Hannah was now "no more sad." She had told God her sorrow, and asked him to give her a child; and she waited for him to do as he pleased. She knew that what God does is right and best; and she trusted all to him, and was happy.

Did God hear Hannah's prayer? Yes; and soon after he gave her a little son. She named him Samuel. And now Hannah remembered her vow to give her child to God. When he was old enough to go away from her she carried him to Shiloh, to the Lord's house there. Then Hannah went to Eli and gave the little boy to him, and said, "I am the woman who prayed here some time ago. I asked God then to give me a son, and he has heard my prayer. Here is my child; I have lent him to the Lord: as long as he lives he shall be lent unto the Lord." It was a happy day

at Shiloh when Samuel was brought there. Elkanah rejoiced and Hannah and Eli too, and they all worshipped God; and Hannah sang a beautiful song of praise.

Hannah left her little boy at Shiloh, and went home to Ramah with her husband. Was she sorry to leave Samuel? No, because she knew that God would bless her child, and that Eli would teach him what was right. Little Samuel was very obedient, and gentle, and kind, and affectionate to old Eli. Every year his mother came to Shiloh to sacrifice, and then she saw her little boy. She made him a little coat, and brought it to him when she came to Shiloh. Eli and Hannah taught Samuel what was right, and they prayed God to bless him, and God heard their prayer. Parents and teachers cannot give children new hearts; but God promises to hear the prayers they offer for them in faith.

Samuel grew and God loved him, and all his friends loved him too. Eli had two sons; they were not little boys, like Samuel, but grown up; and they were priests in the house of the Lord at Shiloh. God's priests ought to be very good and holy men: but Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's sons, were very wicked men; they did not love nor obey God. Their father Eli knew that they were wicked, and he called them, and said, "My sons, I hear no good report of you. You sin against the Lord, and teach his people to do wrong. Why will you do such things?"

But Hophni and Phinehas would not attend to their father; but became more and more wicked. Eli was very unhappy when he saw his sons so self-willed and disobedient. But was he right to let his wicked sons stay and be priests at Shiloh? No, Eli did very wrong; he ought to have punished them and sent them away, and not let them be priests; but Eli foolishly indulged his children, and did not like to punish them.

Then God said he would punish Eli, and slay Hophni and Phinehas in one day. Eli was a good man, but God punished him because he let his sons go on in wickedness, and honored them more than he honored God.

Samuel was still living with Eli; and he was kind and obedient, when Eli's own sons were rebellious and self-willed. Samuel did not know much about God, but he wished to know more, and he was glad and attentive when Eli told him about holy things.

One night, when Samuel was in bed, he heard a voice calling, "Samuel, Samuel." It was God who called; but Samuel did not know this, because God had never called him before. So Samuel arose directly,

and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for thou calledst me." But Eli answered, "No, my son, I called not; lie down again." Then Samuel went again and lay down; but soon the voice called the second time, "Samuel." Samuel still thought it was Eli's voice, and he went again to the old priest, and said, "Here I am."

But Eli said, "My dear child, I did not call; go and lie down again." Samuel obeyed; he wondered who had called him: but he did not ask questions; he did what Eli told him, and lay down quietly in his bed. Did God call again? Yes; the third time, he said, "Samuel, Samuel." Was not Samuel tired of running to Eli? No, he went again to him directly; he was not impatient because he was called so often.

When Eli saw Samuel running to him again, he began to think it was God who had called the child. So he said, "Go, and lie down; and, if he call again, thou shalt say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." So Samuel went back, and lay down; wondering why the holy God should speak to him, a poor sinful boy. Did the voice call again? Yes, the Lord called the fourth time, "Samuel, Samuel." Then the boy arose, and looked up humbly to Heaven, and said, "Speak, for thy servant heareth."

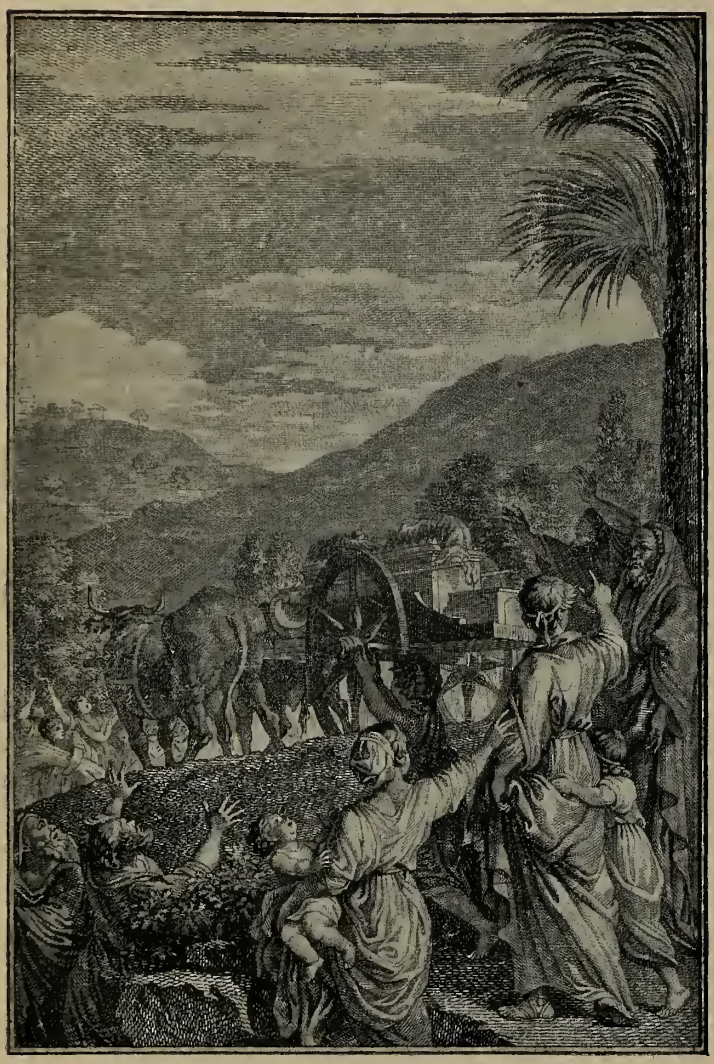
It is very pleasant when children early learn to serve and love God, like Samuel. God calls children now. How? Does he speak to them with a loud voice, and call them by their names? No; they cannot hear his *voice;* but he speaks to them in his *word*, in the Bible. What does he say? He says, "My son, give me thine heart." "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." "Seek ye my face." Do you wish to have God for your friend and Saviour? Then you must, like Samuel, attend to him, and obey him, and say, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

Samuel grew, and every day he learnt more and more about God. He was God's child, and God kept him, and made him wise in holy things. It is very pleasant when children grow older, and better too: but some grow worse, and not better. Eli's sons grew worse, more and more wicked every day. God did not bless Israel now; they were wicked, and the priests were wicked, and God was going to punish them all.

The Philistines came to fight against Israel, and there was a great battle. Who conquered? Not the Israelites, because God did not fight for them, and without him they had no power to conquer their enemies. The Philistines gained the victory; and four thousand of the Israelites were

killed. Then the people of Israel said, "Why does God let the Philistines conquer us? We will bring the ark from Shiloh, and take it to the camp; perhaps the ark will save us from our enemies."

So they sent to Shiloh, and took away the ark, and brought it to the camp, and Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's two sons, came with it. The army of the Israelites shouted very loud when they saw the ark, for they thought they were now sure of the victory; but God could not bless wicked priests and disobedient people; he turned away, and would not help them.



THE PHILISTINES TAKING AWAY THE ARK.

When the Philistines saw the ark, they were frightened; for they thought it was the Israelites' god, an idol-god, like Dagon, or Baal, and they told their soldiers to be very brave, and to fight against them with all their strength. Then the battle began; and the Israelites were beaten, and ran to their tents; and thirty thousand were killed. Where were Hophni and Phinehas? Their dead bodies were found on the field; their souls were gone to appear before God, and to be judged for all their sins! And the holy ark was gone from Israel too; the Philistines took it away, and carried it to their own country; God showed his sinful people that he was not with them now.

Eli did not see the battle; he was too old to go so far; but he felt

very unhappy, because he knew how angry God was, and he thought much about his wicked sons. He went to the gate of the city, and sat down there. All the people of Shiloh were unhappy too, and they waited trembling till the news came about the battle. At last, a man came running very fast from the army; and when the people looked at him, they saw that his clothes were rent, and dust was upon his head, and they knew that he brought very sad news.

THE DEATH OF ELI.

When the man told them that the battle was lost, all the people cried out; the cry was very loud, and very bitter and Eli heard it. He could not see, for his eyes were dim with old age, he was ninety-eight years old, but he heard the noise, and he called the messenger, and asked, "What is the noise I hear? Why do the people cry?" The messenger said, "I have just run from the army." Then Eli trembled very much, and asked, "What is done there? tell me." The man said, "The Israelites are conquered, Hophni and Phinehas are slain, and the ark of God is taken away."

Eli heard it all; but when the messenger said that the ark was gone, he could bear no more; he did not look up, nor speak again; he fell back off his seat, and his neck broke, and he died. He could not bear so

much sorrow. He had lost all his comforts; God's anger was upon the country; and the ark and the blessing of God were taken away.

The Philistines took away the ark from Ebenezer, where the battle was fought, and carried it to Ashdod, and put it in the temple of their idol Dagon. The Philistines thought that the ark was an idol like Dagon; but God soon showed them that it was very different.

DESTRUCTION OF THE IDOL OF DAGON.

When the Philistines came into the temple on the morrow morning, they saw Dagon fallen down before the ark; and they took him, and put him up again. But the next day, they found Dagon fallen down again, and his hands and his head broken to pieces. Who had done this? God did it to show the Philistines how powerful he was, and that their idol god could not stand before his holy ark. God punished the people too of Ashdod with a dreadful plague; and they were very much frightened, and said, the ark should not stay with them any longer, because it hurt them and was opposed to their god Dagon.

Many people say in their hearts, "We do not want God: we do not like to pray, and to think of him, and to serve him; we like our pleasures best, we like the world best." These people are like the Philistines, who sent away the holy ark, because they liked to serve Dagon better than the true God.

Where did the ark go? The Philistines sent it to Gath; but there God punished the people with the plague, and then they sent the ark to Ekron. When the people of Ekron saw it coming, they were frightened, and cried, "Take the ark away; we fear a plague will come with it; send it back to its own country." The ark was seven months in the Philistines' country, and many people died of the plague which God sent.

At last, the Philistines said, they would send the ark home: for they saw that the God of Israel was stronger than they, and they could not resist his power. So they made a new cart, and put the ark into it; two kine drew the cart. They took the right road to go to the land of Israel; they did not stand still; they went straight on, without turning to right or left.

The kine drew the ark in the cart to Bethshemesh. The people there were very busy reaping: for it was harvest time. They heard something coming, and looked up, to see what it was. What did they see? The cart drawn by the kine, without a driver, coming to them along the road; and when they looked into the cart, there they saw the holy ark of God, which they had lost so long. Then the people in Bethshemesh rejoiced very much.

The cart came close to them, and the kine stood still; and the Levites took out the ark, and put it upon a large stone. Then they cut up the cart for wood, and offered the kine in joyful sacrifice to God who had sent them his holy ark again. The lords of the Philistines, who followed the cart, saw all this, and wondered, and returned to their own country.

But a sad thing happened to Bethshemesh that day. The people were very pleased to have the ark again; but some of them forgot what a holy thing it was, and they went to it, and looked into it, very irreverently, without remembering that God had commanded them to honor it, and only allowed the Levites to touch it. The men of Bethshemesh made God angry; and he smote them; and fifty thousand and seventy people died.

The people were very much frightened when they saw so many of their friends dead, and said, "Who can stand before this holy Lord God?" Then they sent to Kirjath-jearim, and asked the people there to come and take the ark away. The men of Kirjath-jearim were glad to have it; and they brought it to the house of a man named Abinadab, and he consecrated his son to keep it; and it stayed there many years.

The Israelites now began to be sorry for their sins, and they cried to the Lord. God had punished them very much, and taken away the ark from them; but now they wanted to have God's blessing again, because they felt they could not be happy without it.

None can be happy without God's love and blessing. We have not the ark now to be with us, as it used to be with Israel, and we do not want it. We have Jesus Christ, and he is always with us, to bless us, if we are his people.

When the Israelites began to cry about their sins, they had a kind friend to teach them what to do. Who was that friend? Samuel; he was now a man, and God's love and blessing were still upon him. God taught him to speak to his people Israel. Samuel said, "Do you wish to serve God in truth, and to have his blessing again? If you do, you must put away your idols, and turn to God, and serve him alone." Then the Israelites attended to Samuel, and put away their idols, and began to serve the Lord. Samuel called them to Mizpeh, and there he prayed for them; and they prayed too, and asked for forgiveness, and cried, "We have sinned against the Lord."

## SAMUEL AND SAUL.

YET twenty years longer the Israelites groaned under the yoke of the Philistines; and all lamented after the Lord, and entreated his return. And Samuel spake to all the house of Israel saying, If ye do return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you and prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth and served the Lord only. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together at Mizpeh, they went up against them. And the children of Israel were afraid, and said to Samuel: Cease not to cry to the Lord for us, that he will save us out of the hands of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered it wholly as a burnt-offering to the Lord; and he cried to the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew

near to battle against Israel, but the Lord thundered with a great thunder that day upon the Philistines and discomfited them, and they were smitten before Israel.

And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh and pursued the Philistines and smote them until they came under Beth-car. Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. Moreover Samuel instituted the schools of the Prophets. Hence he is mentioned in Holy Scripture with Moses in importance.

When Samuel was old he made his sons judges over Israel in Beer-sheba. But his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre and took bribes and perverted judgment. Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together and came to Samuel at Ramah; and said to him: Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways; now make us a king to judge us like all the nations, and go out before us and fight our battles. But their words displeased Samuel, and he prayed to the Lord.

And the Lord said to him: Hearken to their voice and make them a king. And Samuel called the people together at Mizpeh, and proceeded to elect their future ruler by lot. And the let fell first upon the tribe of Benjamin, and then upon the family of Matri, next upon the household of Kish, and lastly upon his son Saul; and when they sought him he could not be found, for he had hid himself behind the carts and baggage; and when he was found and stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. And Samuel said to all the people: See ye him, whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted and said: Long live the king. Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord. Then he anointed Saul.

Then Nahash, the Ammonite, came up and encamped against Jabesh-Gilead; and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee. And he answered them: On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel.

But the elders of Jabesh sent messengers to Gibeah of Saul and told the tidings in the ears of the people; and all the people lifted up their voices and wept. And behold, Saul came after the oxen out of the field;

and when he saw the people weeping and heard those tidings, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and his anger was kindled greatly. And he took the yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying: Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen. And the fear of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out to the number of three hundred thousand.

SAUL ANOINTED BY SAMUEL.

And Saul put the people in three companies; and they came in the midst of the host in the morning-watch and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day, and scattered them so that not two of them were left together. Pleased with Saul's victory and bravery all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king and sacrificed sacrifices of peace-offerings before the Lord; and there Samuel and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

And Samuel said to all Israel: Behold I have hearkened to your voice and have made a king over you. And now, behold, the king walketh before you, and I am old and gray-headed. I have walked before you from my childhood to this day. Behold here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his Anointed: whose ox have I taken, or whose ass have I taken, or whom have I defrauded? whom

have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.

And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand. And he said to them: The Lord is witness against you and his Anointed is witness this day that ye have not found aught in my hands. And they answered: He is witness. Then Samuel went on saying: Behold, the Lord hath set a king over you. If ye will fear the Lord and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against his commandment, then shall both ye and your king be safe and happy under his care. But if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers. Fear therefore the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart.

JONATHAN SMITING THE PHILISTINES.

After this the Philistines again invaded Israel, and they made servants of the people, neither would they let the men of Israel have swords or spears, for fear they might rise up and fight against them. Nevertheless Jonathan and his band smote the Philistines that were in Geba. And the Philistines heard of it and gathered themselves together to fight against Israel. And they came up and encamped in Michnash. Then

Saul called the Israelites together to Gilgal. But the people were sore afraid and hid themselves in caves and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits, so that only six hundred men followed Saul, trembling.

Now there was a deep ravine between the hostile camps with steep cliffs on either side. And Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armour: Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised, and discover ourselves to them; it may be that the Lord will work for us.

At the first assault twenty men were slain. And there was trembling in the host, in the field and among all the people, and the earth quaked: it was a very great trembling of God. Now when Saul had heard by the watchmen of the commotion in the camp of the Philistines, and that they were beating down one another, he and all the people that were with him came to the battle. Likewise, they that had hid themselves, when they heard that the Philistines fled, pursued after them till night-fall.

Then the people flew upon the spoil and took sheep and oxen and calves and slew them on the ground, and the people did eat them with the blood, so hungry were they. For before the battle, Saul had adjured the people, saying: Cursed is the man that eats any food till evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food. And they came to a wood where honey was dropping from the bee-nests in the trees. But no man touched it for fear of the oath. Only Jonathan, who had not heard his father charging the people with an oath, put forth the end of his spear, and dipped it in a honey-comb, and put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes were enlightened.

And when one of the people told him of the oath of his father, he said: My father hath troubled the land; see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey; how much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to-day of the spoil of their enemies which they found, for had there not been now a much greater slaughter of the enemy. But when Saul found it out by the lot, he said to Jonathan: Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said: I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in my hands, and lo, I must die. And Saul answered: God do so to me and more also (if I break my vow), thou shalt surely die, Jonathan. But the people said to Saul: Shall Jonathan die, who has wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid; as the Lord lives, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.

So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines, and whithersoever he turned himself, he humbled them.

Now the Amalekites alone had not been smitten. Therefore Samuel said to Saul: The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people: now hearken thou unto the voice of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not. And Saul smote the Amalekites, but spared Agag their king, and the best of the sheep and the oxen and all that was good.

THE LOT FALLS UPON JONATHAN.

Then came the word of the Lord to Samuel, saying: It repenteth me, that I have set up Saul to be king, for he turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried to the Lord all night. And on the next day already Saul met him, and said to him: Blessed be thou of the Lord; I have performed the commandment of the Lord. But Samuel replied: What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the

oxen which I hear? And Saul said: The people have brought them from the Amalekites, for they spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice to the Lord, thy God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

Then Samuel said to Saul: Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord said to me this night. And he said to him: Say on. And Samuel said: When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel? And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said: Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites; wherefore didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst seize upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord? Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying his voice? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. Then Saul said: I have sinned! yet honor me now, I pray thee, before Israel, and turn once more with me, that I may worship the Lord, thy God Samuel, overcome by this repeated entreaty of the humbled king, joined him in the sacrifice. Then Agag, the king of the Amalekites, was, at his command, brought before the prophet. And he came fawningly and said: Surely the bitterness of death is past. But Samuel said: As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be

THE DEATH OF AGAG.

childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. Then he went to Ramah, and came no more to see Saul until the day of his death; nevertheless he mourned for the rejected king.

# THE STORY OF DAVID.

ONE day, when Samuel was mourning for Saul, God spoke to him, and said, "Do not mourn any longer for Saul. I will not have him for king, because he has forsaken me. Take a horn of oil, and go to the house of Jesse, in Bethlehem. I have chosen a king among his sons." Then Samuel obeyed God, and went to Bethlehem, and made a sacrifice there, as God told him, and he called Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice. Jesse had eight sons. Seven of them were at home, but the youngest was in the fields keeping sheep.

When Samuel saw Eliab, Jesse's eldest son, he was very much pleased with him; and thought he must be the new king God had chosen. But God did not look at the face, he looked at the heart; he wanted a king who would love and serve him, not a king who was tall and handsome. He said, "I have not chosen this man." Samuel looked at the six other sons also, but God had chosen none of them. Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Where is thy youngest son? Call him, for we must have him here."

Then Jesse sent out to the field, and brought in his youngest son. His name was David. David was young; he too was beautiful; but God did not choose him for his beauty. David loved God, and he wished and prayed to love him more. When David was alone in the fields keeping his sheep, he liked to think of God. And then, David used to pray, and to play upon his harp, and sing beautiful hymns of praise to God. How pleasant it is when young people begin to love and serve the Lord early, as David did! When David came into his father's house, God said to Samuel, "Anoint him; this is the king I have chosen." Then Samuel poured oil upon David's head, and anointed him; and all his brothers looked on.

The Israelites' old enemies, the Philistines, now came to fight against them again. They pitched their tents on a high mountain, and Saul and his army stood upon another mountain opposite, and there was a valley between the two armies. The Philistines had with them a very bold commander, a great giant, named Goliath. He was very tall, and covered with

thick armor; and he had a great sword, and shield, and spear: and he stood, and cried to the army of Israel, "Why do you come to fight against me? If you can, choose a man, and let him come and fight me, and try to kill me." The Israelites were much frightened when they heard the proud Philistine speak thus, and Saul was frightened also.

Then David came to the king, spoke very boldly, for God made him bold, and said, "Do not fear this great Philistine; I am ready to go and fight him." But Saul said, "Thou hast not power to conquer him; thou art young, and he is very strong, and has been used to fighting all his life." David answered, "I am a shepherd, and I keep my father's sheep in Bethlehem. One day, a lion and a bear came to my flock, and took away a lamb, and I ran, and killed the lion and the bear, and saved the lamb, and took it out of the lion's mouth, and brought it back to the fold. It was God who gave me strength to kill those great animals, and I know he will give me power now to conquer this wicked Philistine. God is with us, and he will deliver us from our enemies." Then Saul said, "Go, and the Lord be with thee." Saul gave David all his armor, a helmet, and a spear, and a sword. But David said, "No, I do not want these; I have not been used to them."

So he took them all off, and chose five smooth stones, and put them into his shepherd's bag; and he took a sling, and a staff, and went to meet the giant. Then the Philistine came out, but when he saw David, he laughed at him, and said, "Canst thou conquer me? Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field!" But David answered, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and a spear, and a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. I know that thou art very strong, and that I am weak, and unable of myself to fight thee; but God is with me, and he is stronger than thou. He will give me power to conquer and kill thee; for he can fight without swords and spears, for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands."

Then David ran to meet his great enemy. He took a stone, and put it into his sling, and slung it; and the stone went into the forehead of the giant, and he fell down on the ground. Then David ran to the Philistine, and stood upon him, and took the sword of the giant, and slew him, and cut off his head; for David had no sword of his own. Then all the Philistines, when they saw that their commander was dead, fled; and

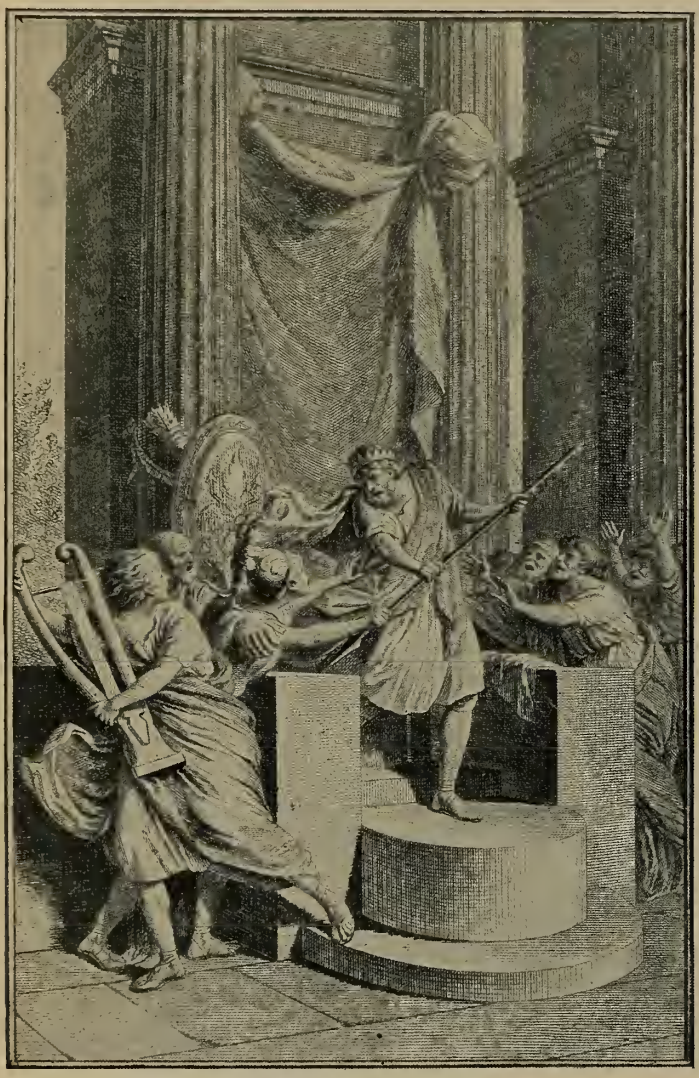
the Israelites followed, and killed very many of them. The Israelites returned shouting for joy, and David took the giant's head, and brought it to Jerusalem.

How could young David, without armor, conquer the great strong Philistine? It was not David's strength, nor his sling, nor his stone, that gained the victory; they had no power; it was David's God who conquered, and he alone. David looked in faith to God for help, and he gave him the victory. We have enemies to fight too; not great soldiers like Goliath, but enemies who fight against our souls. We must fight in God's strength, not in our own. We must ask God to fight for us, and then we shall be enabled to conquer and gain the victory.

GOLIATH SLAIN BY DAVID.

Saul now began to hate David. Why? Because he was jealous of him, for he thought the people loved David more than they loved himself. After the battle and the victory, when Saul and all his people were going home, the women came out to meet them; and they sang, and played, and danced, and shouted for joy. They sang, "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands." This made the king very angry. He thought they gave very little honor to him, and a great deal of honor to David, and that they loved David best, and would make him king.

So Saul grew very jealous, and looked unkindly at David; though David had done no wrong. Jealousy is a very great sin. We ought to be glad to see good people honored and loved. It is very wrong to want to have all the praise ourselves, and to feel angry when others are praised. We ought to ask God to take jealousy and selfishness out of our hearts.



SAUL ATTEMPTING TO KILL DAVID.

The next day the evil spirit came into Saul again; and David took his harp and began to play, and tried to quiet him. But David's harp did not take away Saul's passion now. Saul had a spear in his hand, and he tried to throw it at David while he played; but David turned away, and the spear passed without hurting him. When Saul saw that God was David's friend, he was afraid; he could not kill David, but he sent him away, because he did not like to see him. He made David captain over the soldiers; and they all loved him, and the people loved him; and God loved him too, and kept him, wherever he went.

There was a man who lived at Maon, named Nabal. He was very rich, and had great possessions in Carmel: sheep, and goats, and asses, and camels. He lived near the place where David now was, and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. David knew that Nabal was very rich, and he sent messengers to him, to ask for food. David's servants spoke very

respectfully to Nabal; they did not rudely ask for what they wanted; for David taught them to honor and respect all men. But Nabal was a selfish and cruel man. He did not care for other people; he tried only to please himself. All his money and all his possessions he kept for his own use; he never thought about the poor and hungry, who had no food and no home.

Nabal was angry with David's servants; instead of giving them any thing he drove them away in a passion, and sent them back again to David. When David heard of Nabal's unkindness and passion, he was angry too. Was David right to be angry? No; he ought to have been patient and forgiving, as he was when Saul was unkind to him.

So David told his men to take their swords, and he made all ready to go to Nabal to kill him, because he had been unkind and selfish and cruel. But Nabal had a wife named Abigail. She was not like her husband; she was gentle, and kind, and willing to give away what she could. When Abigail heard about Nabal's cruelty she was very sorry. She knew that David was a good man, and that he was in great trouble, and trying to hide from Saul; and Abigail wished to be kind to him and his men. So she called her servants and told them to make ready some sheep, and corn, and figs, and grapes, and to put them upon asses,

ABIGAIL BRINGING PRESENTS TO DAVID.

and take them to David; and she followed, but she did not tell Nabal where she was going.

When Abigail met with David, she came down from the ass, and fell on her face before him. Then she spoke very gently to David, and asked him not to be angry, but to forgive her wicked husband. Abigail loved God; and she told David how wrong it is to be passionate and angry; but she spoke very respectfully when she said this, and reminded David that God could preserve him, and punish his enemies; and that, therefore, he must be patient and leave all to God.

When David heard Abigail talk so gently, he became gentle too. He felt he had done wrong, and he thanked God for sending Abigail to keep him from shedding blood. So Abigail gave the present to David, and he thanked her, and she went home. And David and his men had food to eat now, without fighting and shedding blood. It was not right for David to punish Nabal, but God punished him. God must punish our enemies, not we.

When Abigail came home she found Nabal making a great feast with his friends. They were eating and drinking, and very merry. It was wicked merriment. They loved their own pleasure and ease; but they did not think of their poor hungry neighbors; they did not care for God, nor holy things: all their thoughts were about this world; eating and drinking, and pleasing themselves.

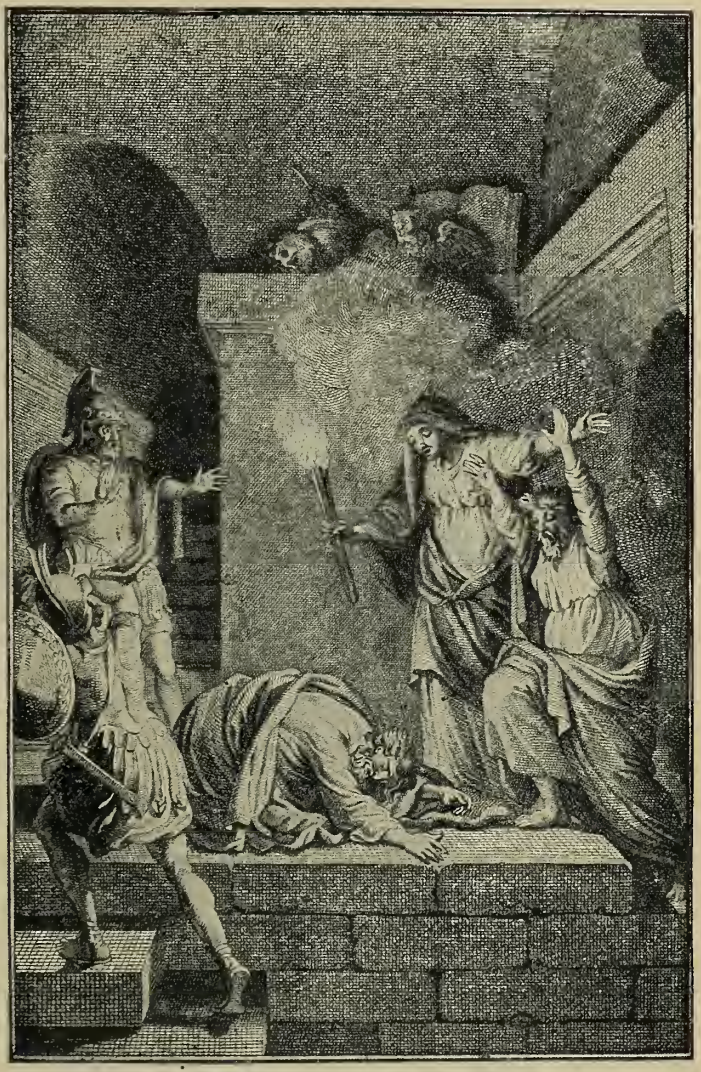
Abigail did not stay with this wicked company; she did not speak to Nabal then, but next morning she told him about David, and all that she had done. Nabal felt frightened and unhappy at what his wife said. He knew he had done wrong; but Abigail's reproof did not make him repent and turn to God. He had no comfort now. His riches and his worldly company could do him no good; and God was not his friend. He lived only ten days after.

Where was Saul this long time? He was still at his house, unhappy and discontented; the evil spirit troubling him more and more. The Philistines now came to fight against Israel, and Saul gathered together all his soldiers at Gilboa. But he felt much frightened when he looked upon the army of his enemies, for he knew that he had not God to fight for him.

Saul went and asked God to help him; but had no answer. Saul had forsaken God; now God forsook him. Saul had no answer, because

he did not pray humbly; he was not truly sorry for his sin. He was frightened and miserable, but he was not penitent and humble. God promises always to answer sincere prayers; but Saul's prayer was careless and insincere; and, therefore, God would not attend to it.

What could Saul do now? Where did he go for help? Did he pray again to God, and ask for a new heart, and a right spirit? No, Saul was soon tired of prayer, for he did not care for God's blessing and forgiveness. He called his servants, and asked them if they knew a witch who could tell him what he wanted to know. The witches were wicked women who pretended to have the power of raising dead people, and of foretelling future things. God had commanded them to be put to death. But Saul was now grown so foolish, and so wicked, that he wished to ask advice of a witch, and not of God, nor of his holy prophets.



SAUL AND THE WITCH OF ENDOR.

Saul's servants told him there was a witch living at Endor; so he changed his dress, that people might not know him, and went secretly, by night, to Endor. Saul came to the house where this wicked woman lived, and asked her to raise a dead man to life for him. The woman did not know Saul; and she refused at first to do what he wished, for she was afraid of being put to death. But Saul told her

not to fear; and promised she should not be punished. Then she said, "Whom shall I bring up?" And Saul told her to bring up Samuel. The foolish woman had no power to raise Samuel.

But God showed his power by causing a figure like Samuel to come up, and speak to Saul. When the woman saw the figure coming up out of the ground, she was very much frightened, and cried out for fear. Then Saul looked too. What did he see? He saw the figure of an old man; he thought it was Samuel, and he bowed down to the ground. Then the figure asked, "Why hast thou called me up?" Saul said, "I am sore distressed; the Philistines make war against me; God is gone from me; and answers me no more, and I have called thee to tell me what I shall do." Then the figure said, "Why dost thou ask of me, if the Lord is thine enemy? He has departed from thee, and given the kingdom to David, because thou obeyedst not his voice. The Philistines will fight against Israel; and Israel will be conquered; and to-morrow thou and thy sons shall be with me."

What did Saul do? He fell down on the ground in fear and horror. He was very miserable; he had now no hope; to-morrow he must die; his body must fall on the battle-field; and where must his soul go? Could it go to Heaven? No; he was not ready for Heaven. Satan was in his heart, not God's Holy Spirit.

The woman understood now who Saul was; and she and his servants tried to comfort him. She spoke kindly to him; and made ready some meat and bread for him to eat. But could all this do Saul any good now? No; he was going to die, and God alone can comfort people in death. But Saul could not go to God for comfort. It was too late; he had forsaken God, and God had cast him off for ever.

Saul arose from the ground, and ate what the woman made ready, and then he and his servants went away. The next day, in battle, he died by falling on his own sword.

Was David now king of all Israel? No; seven years he reigned only over Judah; Saul had left a son, named Ish-bosheth; and Abner, the captain, took Ish-bosheth and made him king over Israel. There was a long war between the party of Ish-bosheth and the party of David. Abner was captain of Ish-bosheth's soldiers, and Joab was captian of David's soldiers.

David wanted peace in his kingdom; but he knew that all his enemies must first be conquered, because God had told him this, and

promised to fight for him, and give him the victory. David grew stronger and stronger every day: and Ish-bosheth grew weaker and weaker. Abner knew that David was God's chosen king; and he sent to him, and promised to help him to reign over the whole kingdom, Israel as well as Judah.

So David and Abner made peace, and feasted together at Hebron. But Joab, David's captain, hated Abner, and did not like David to make peace with him. Why? Because Abner had killed Asahel, Joab's brother, in a quarrel, some time before; and Joab had not forgiven Abner. So when Abner went away, Joab followed, and called him, and pretended to speak kindly to him; but Joab had a sword, and he drew it out, and thrust it into Abner's side. Abner fell down dead directly; and the people came and told David.

ABNER SLAIN BY JOAB.

David was angry with Joab, and sorry for Abner. All the people mourned; and when Abner was buried, David himself followed the dead body to the grave. Did David punish Joab for the murder? No, he was afraid; he thought he had not enough power to do so; but he never forgot Joab's wickedness; he said, God would punish him, though he could not.

Soon after Abner's death, there was another sad murder in Israel. Ish-bosheth was killed in his bed, by two men who came into his house

pretending to get corn. The wicked murderers cut off the head of Ish-bosheth, and brought it to David, and said, "See, here is the head of the son of thine enemy Saul."

The men thought this would please David; but he commanded that the murderers should be slain; so David's servants killed the two wicked men, and hung them up in Hebron; but the head of Ish-bosheth they buried honorably in Abner's tomb. David was right to punish the men who killed Ish-bosheth, because God has commanded that murderers shall be put to death.

ISH-BOSHETH SLAIN BY HIS SERVANTS.

Who reigned over Israel after Ish-bosheth was dead? David. The tribes of Israel all came to him, and asked him to be their king. David now ruled over a large country, and had great possessions. Some years before, he was a poor shepherd boy; now he was a great king.

God loved David, and he gave him honor; but God does not always honor those he loves in this world. Sometimes his people are poor, and have no possessions; perhaps they have not even food and clothing. He sees it best not to give riches and honors to all his people here: and he knows that riches and honors cannot make them happy. But God has riches to give all his people in heaven.

What was the first thing King David did? His enemies, the Jebusites, had possession of Jerusalem, and he went there and smote them, and took the city. David then began to feel safe, and his power grew greater and greater every day; for God blessed David in all things, and gave him victory, and strength, and riches. It is God who gives us all the good things we have. Let us thank him for his kindness, and ask him to give us his blessing too, because that alone can make us truly happy.

The Philistines now came again to fight against David. He remembered that God had promised to protect him; so before he began to fight against the Philistines, he asked God, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Wilt thou deliver them into my hand?" And God said, "Go up, I will deliver them into thy hand." Then David went, and did as God commanded him; and soon he gained the victory over his enemies.

When David was safe and happy, did he forget God, and begin to love worldly things better than holy things? No; when all his enemies were conquered, and his kingdom safe, the first thing he remembered was God's holy ark. The ark was still at Kirjath-Jearim, in the house of Abinadab, who had kept it many years; but David wanted to have it now in his own city of Jerusalem; so he went with many of his people to Kirjath-Jearim to bring it back. They came to Abinadab's house, and took out the ark, and put it in a new cart; and Uzzah and Ahio, Abinadab's sons, drove the cart.

Then David and all the people were very glad; and they went with the ark, playing and singing for joy. After a little time, they came to a rough place, and the oxen that drew the cart stumbled, and shook the ark. When Uzzah saw the ark shaken, he was afraid it might fall, and he put out his hand, and took hold of it. But Uzzah forgot how very holy the ark was; he did not honor it as he ought, and God punished him, and struck him dead directly. Many years before, God had punished the men of Bethshemesh, because they looked into the ark; and so now God punished Uzzah. He did not need Uzzah so irreverently to take hold of the holy ark; he himself could keep it safely.

Uzzah's death was a sad end to David's happiness. All the people were frightened, and David said, he would not have the ark with him now. Was he right not to want now to have the ark? No; he was wrong to be so much afraid; God did not wish to frighten and trouble his people; he only wished to teach them to honor and reverence his holy things.

But there was a good man named Obed-edom, who was not afraid

to have the ark; so it was carried to his house. Obed-edom was very happy when he had the ark, because God's blessing came with it. All was right at Obed-edom's house when the ark was there.

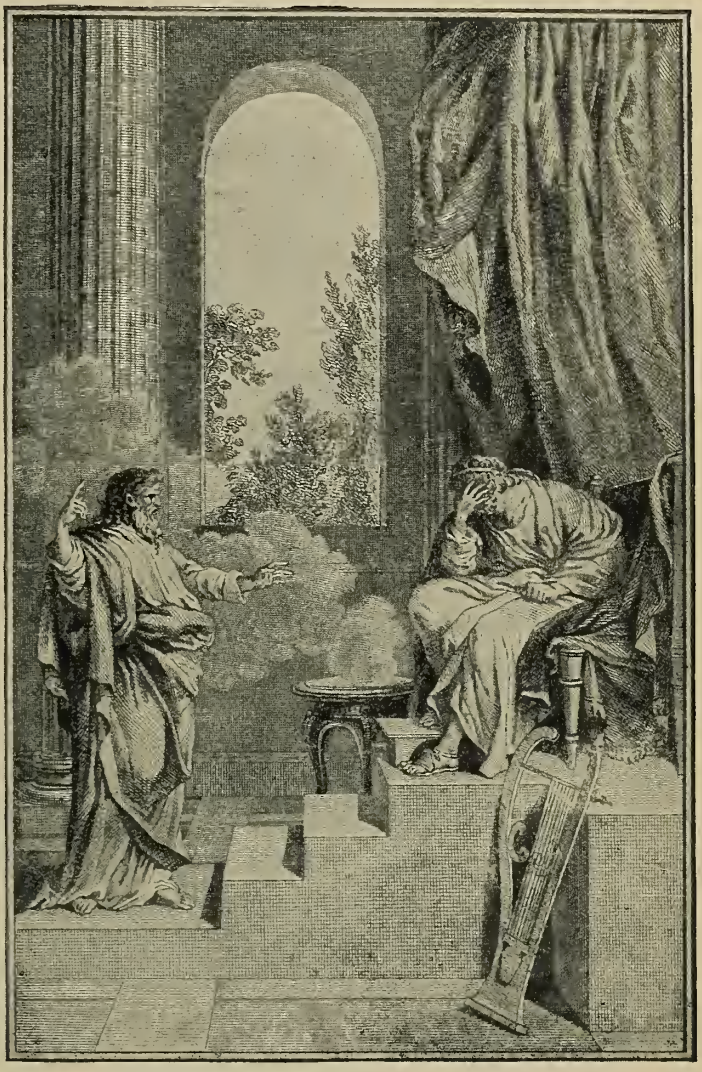
When David heard that God had blessed Obed-edom, he was no longer afraid of the ark; so he went to the house where it was, and took it away; but the priests carried it upon their shoulders. David had learned to be more reverent, and to teach his people to be reverent too.

DAVID DANCING BEFORE THE ARK.

When the ark had gone a very little way, David offered sacrifices to God. He asked for God's blessing first, and then he went on safely, knowing that God was with him. David and all the people brought the ark home; and the king was so happy that he danced for joy.

The ark was put in a tabernacle which David made for it; and then he offered sacrifices again, and blessed the people, and gave them bread, and wine, and meat, and sent them away. It was a happy, holy day at Jerusalem. Why were they all so joyful? Because they had the ark with them again. The feasting, and singing, and shouting, were all holy; the people did everything that day in the fear and honor of God; and then they had his blessing, and that made them happy.

We are now going to read a very sad story about David. There was a man named Uriah, who had a wife named Bathsheba. Bathsheba was very beautiful; and David loved her very much, and wanted to marry her; but he knew he must not, because she was Uriah's wife. God says, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife;" and it was very wicked of David to do what God had commanded him not to do. But David did not then ask God to help him resist sin, and, therefore, he soon became more wicked still. He wished Uriah were dead. He could not put him to death; but he sent him to fight, and hoped he would be killed in the battle.



NATHAN REPROVING DAVID FOR HIS SIN.

The Israelites were then fighting with the Ammonites, and Joab was captain of David's soldiers; so David wrote a letter to Joab, and said, "Set Uriah in the battle; let him stand in the front, and do not help him; but leave him alone, that he may be smitten and die." Then David sent for Uriah, and pretended to be very kind to him; and gave him the letter, and told him to go to Joab.

When Joab had finished reading the letter, he called Uriah, and told him to stand in front of the battle, in a dangerous place. Uriah did not know why he was to stand there; but he did as Joab commanded; and soon he was slain by his enemies, and fell down dead. Then Joab sent and told David.

Was David sorry? No, he was glad; because he could now do as he wished, and marry Bathsheba. Satan was tempting David, and David was not trying to resist the temptation. He did not ask help from God; so God turned away from David, and left him to himself. Bathsheba mourned for her husband some time; and when the mourning was past, David sent for her, and married her, and she became his wife.

One day Nathan the prophet came to see David. Nathan did not now bring a message of love from God; he had something very sad to say to David; but he did not at once tell him about his wickedness, for God wanted David himself to feel and confess his sin. Nathan began by telling this story to David.

He said: "There were two men living in a city; one was rich and had great possessions—sheep, and oxen, and cattle. The other man was very poor; he had only one little lamb. He loved this lamb very much; it ate out of his hand; drank out of his cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. One day a friend came to see the rich man and to eat with him. But the rich man would not kill his own sheep; he went to the poor man's house, and took away the little lamb, and killed it, and dressed it for his friend."

When Nathan had finished the story, David said angrily, "The man who has done this shall surely die, because he had no pity." Then Nathan looked at David and said, "Thou art the man. God gave thee riches and possessions; many, many things. But what hast thou done? Thou hast killed Uriah with the sword, and taken away his wife to be thy wife. And now God must punish thee, the sword shall never depart from thy house. Thou hast sinned secretly; but God saw the sin, and he will punish it openly."

David now felt his wickedness; he felt how sad it is to displease God. He did not try to deny nor excuse his sin; but he confessed humbly at once, "I have sinned against the Lord."

David now had new troubles. When he was young, he was troubled by Saul; when he was old, he was troubled by his own children. God sent sorrow to David now to punish his sin. Sin is always the cause of sorrow.

David had many sons; and some of them were very wicked. One was named Absalom, and another Amnon. These two brothers did not live in love and peace together; Absalom hated Amnon, and would not speak

to him. Hatred was in the heart of Absalom a long time, and it grew stronger and stronger, till at last he determined to kill his brother Amnon; for he could not rest while he lived.

Hatred often ends in murder. The Bible says, "He that hateth his brother is a murderer." When we feel anger beginning to rise in our hearts, we ought to ask God to take it away, and make us full of love. We cannot tell how hatred may end.

How did Absalom kill his brother? He thought he would kill him slyly, without his father's knowledge; so he made a great feast and invited all his brothers; and commanded his servants to kill Amnon when he came. Amnon came to the feast. And when they were all merry, the servants rushed in, and smote Amnon, and killed him. All his brothers were frightened, and fled; and Absalom fled too, because he was afraid that David might punish him for the murder.

ABSALOM CAUSES AMNON TO BE SLAIN.

The king soon heard the sad story; and he arose, and rent his clothes, and lay on the ground, and wept; and all his sons wept too. Where was Absalom? He escaped to Geshur, and staid there three years. David did not see him all that time. One son was gone away; and another son was dead. David mourned for them both. At last Joab came to the king and begged that Absalom might come home. David wanted

to forgive his wicked son, for he still loved him; so he told Joab to send and bring Absalom from Geshur.

But David would not see his son; so Absalom staid at his own house in Jerusalem. Was David right to let Absalom come back? No; Absalom was a wicked murderer, and God had commanded murderers to be put to death; but David loved Absalom, and spared him. All the people admired him, and liked to look at him.

Absalom pretended to be sorry, but he was not truly so; his heart was full of pride and rebellion still. Soon after, he prepared chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. And when he saw the people going to the king for judgment, he often called to them, and spoke kindly to them, and asked them what they wanted; for Absalom wished to make the people love him more than they loved his father. He wanted to be king himself; and said he should be a better king than David.

The people attended to what Absalom said, and many of them promised to obey and love him as their king. David knew nothing about this, for Absalom was very sly, and deceived his father. He said to David, "Let me go now and pay my vow in Hebron: for I vowed when I was in Geshur, that if the Lord would bring me back to Jerusalem, then I would serve him." David was pleased to hear this; for he hoped his disobedient son was going to begin to love and serve the Lord; so he said to Absalom, "Go in peace."

Why did Absalom go to Hebron? Not to offer sacrifice; not to worship God: he went there to make himself king. He told the people when they heard the trumpet to shout and say, "Absalom reigns in Hebron." Very many of the people were in the conspiracy, but a few were still faithful to David; and a messenger came and told him the news about his wicked son's rebellion.

What could David do? He had very little time to think; for Absalom might soon come to Jerusalem and kill him and the faithful people. So David said, "Let us arise and flee." All David's servants were ready to follow him; and they went away from Jerusalem as fast as possible, and came to Mount Olivet.

Then David went on to Bahurim, where he had a new sorrow. A wicked man named Shimei came out, and cursed him, and threw stones at him, and said God was punishing him now for all his cruelty to Saul: and would take away the kingdom and give it to Absalom. This wicked

man did not speak the truth. God was indeed punishing David, but not because David was cruel to Saul. He was punishing him for murdering Uriah.

David's friends were very angry with Shimei: they did not like to hear their master so cruelly accused, and they said they would kill this wicked man. But David would not let them. He knew all these troubles came from God, and he humbly submitted to him. So David and his men went on quietly, without attending to Shimei. Shimei's curses could not hurt David because God was his friend, and took care of him still. He was safe in God's hands; for God punished him in love to make him humble and holy. And David knew this.

DAVID STONED BY SHIMEI.

Where was Absalom now? He went to Jerusalem to his father's house, and there he consulted with his friends what he should do. There was a friend of David with Absalom, named Hushai. Hushai pretended to be Absalom's friend, and listened to all the wicked prince said; and when he found that Absalom was determined to go to battle against his father, he told the priests, and they told David. So David made his soldiers ready to go and fight against Absalom.

David must fight against his own son! But he still loved his son,

and he told the captains to be gentle with wicked Absalom. The battle was in the wood of Ephraim. David's soldiers soon conquered the rebellious people; and twenty thousand were slain. Absalom rode upon a mule, and tried to escape; but as he went through the wood, his long hair caught in the branches of an oak, and "he was taken up between the heaven and the earth." The mule went away, and Absalom hung in the oak; so that he could not escape.

THE DEATH OF ABSALOM

One of David's soldiers saw Absalom hanging, but the man did not hurt him, because he remembered David's command; but he told Joab; and Joab took three darts, and went to the tree where Absalom hung, and smote him, and killed him. So the battle was ended, and David's soldiers had the victory.

But where was David himself? He did not see the battle. He was waiting by the gate of the city Mahanaim to hear the news; and the watchman went up to the top of the wall to look. At last the watchman saw a man running, and he told the king.

Then David began to tremble; he felt very much afraid. Soon after another man was seen running. The first soon came to David, and fell down, and said, "God has delivered up the men who lifted their hand against the king." But David thought most about his son; and he asked,

"Is the young man Absalom safe?" The messenger said, "I cannot tell." Then the other man came to David, and said, "The Lord has avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee." But David could not attend to the victory; he thought only about Absalom, and he cried again, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

The messenger did not wish to grieve the king; he could not then tell him the whole of the sad story; he only said, "May the king's enemies all be as that young man is now." David understood what this meant; he knew how it was with Absalom; and he could not bear to hear more. He arose directly and went to his own room, for he wished to be alone; and as he went up, he cried very, very sorrowfully, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!"

One day a messenger came to David. It was Gad, the prophet of the Lord; and he brought a very sad message. He said, God had sent him to say, that he must punish David for his sin; and he offered him one of these three punishments: three years' famine, or three months to be destroyed before his enemies; or three days' plague in the land; and David was to choose which it should be. David felt it hard to make a choice, but he submitted patiently to God's will; for he knew it was right that his sin should be punished. But what did he choose? He said, "Let us fall into the hand of God, for his mercy is great, and let us not fall into the hand of man." Then Gad understood that David chose the plague.

It was a fearful time for Israel when God sent the destroying angel among them. David had been proud of the number of his subjects, and now God took very many of them away to humble David's pride. But did the Israelites deserve to be punished? Yes; they too had displeased God: and they were punished, as well as their king.

Three days the dreadful plague lasted in Canaan. The angel went through the country, destroying wherever he went; and, at last, he came to Jerusalem, where David lived. David looked up, and saw the angel standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand. The sword was over Jerusalem, ready to strike and destroy it. Then David fell on his face before God, and cried for mercy. He knew how merciful God was, and that he did not wish to destroy all his people; that he is more willing to forgive than to punish; so David said, "It is I who sinned; I commanded the people to be numbered: I have done wickedly. Punish me, but spare my people, for what have they done?" And did God hear

David's prayer? Yes; he sent Gad again with a kind message to David. God said that David must build an altar, and offer up sacrifices; and then he promised to forgive.

And now the time came for David to die; so he called his dear son Solomon, to give him his last commands, and to bid him farewell. David told Solomon to remember that wicked man Joab, and punish him as a murderer, because he killed Abner, many years before, and deserved to die. And Shimei, too, who had cursed David, was to be punished as Solomon should think right.

CESSATION OF THE PLAGUE.

But David charged Solomon to be kind to Barzillai, who had been so kind to David when he was in sorrow and trouble. Did David feel angry and revengeful when he was dying? No; but he knew that wicked men must be punished, because this is God's command. Good kings must be just; they must punish those who disobey God's laws. Did David say anything more to Solomon? Yes; for David felt very anxious about him.

He wished him to love and serve God, and to teach his people in the right way; and David knew that Solomon could not reign well, if God did not help and bless him. So David spoke very affectionately, and very solemnly to Solomon, and said, "My son, know thou the God of thy fathers

my God who has kept me all my life long. Serve him with all thy heart, sincerely and willingly; for God knows the heart. He knows who truly love him, and who only pretend to love him. He is ready to hear thy prayer; and if thou seek him, thou shalt find him; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever." Then David looked up to Heaven, and sang a beautiful song of praise to God. All his troubles were ended now; God was with him; he closed his eyes in peace, and his happy soul went to be for ever in Heaven, far away from all sin and sorrow.

## KING SOLOMON.

SOLOMON was now king. His reign was a very happy one; not like David's, full of sorrow and trouble. But some sad things happened in the beginning of Solomon's reign. Adonijah rebelled again, and was put to death. Joab, too, was slain, because he was in Adonijah's conspiracy, and because of the murders he had formerly committed. Abiathar was sent away. Solomon could not let him be priest any longer, for he also had rebelled with Adonijah; but Solomon did not put him to death, because he had once been a kind friend to David. Was Shimei killed? Not at first; Solomon commanded him to stay quietly at his own house in Jerusalem, and promised him safety there; but if he went away from Jerusalem, Solomon told him he should die. Shimei stayed at his house three years; and then he disobeyed the king, and went to Achish, at Gath.

Shimei soon returned to Jerusalem; but he had disobeyed Solomon, and therefore he was slain. All this was very sad, but we know it was right for these wicked men to die. Sin must be punished. Perhaps God does not punish it directly; he waits many years; he gives time for repentance; for he does not wish people to die in their wickedness. God is ready to save all, and he will forgive the most wicked people, if they repent and turn to him. But if not, he cannot wait for ever. He cannot forget sin which is unrepented of, and unforgiven; not washed away in the blood of Jesus. At last he will punish all rebellious sinners, as he punished wicked Adonijah, and Joab, and Shimei, after so many years.

All was quiet now: Solomon could reign in peace, because his wicked enemies were dead. And did he remember all that his father had told him? Did he try to serve God, and to teach his people to serve him

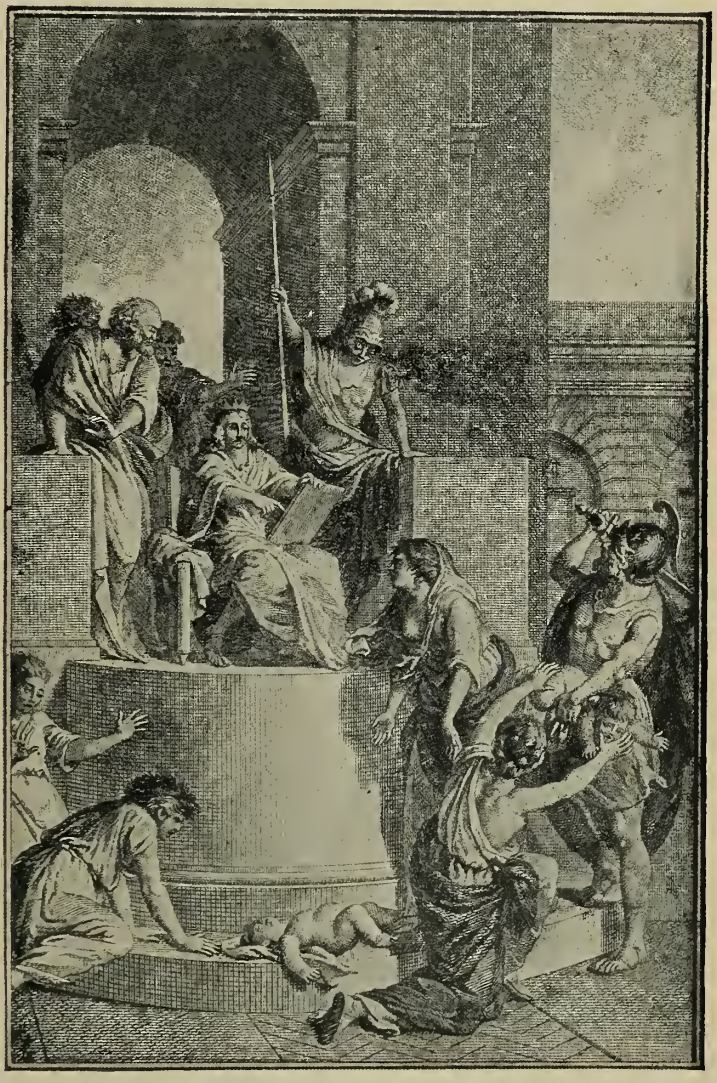
too? Yes, Solomon loved the Lord. He was young, and did not yet know much; but he wished and prayed to know more.

Solomon went to Gibeon, to sacrifice there. The tabernacle which Moses made, was at Gibeon, and the brazen altar. But the ark was at Jerusalem, in the tent which David had made for it. Solomon offered a thousand burnt-offerings upon the altar at Gibeon. He had great possessions, and he liked to give much of what he had to God. He wanted to show his love and his thankfulness to him. And Solomon offered his sacrifices in faith.

SOLOMON ASKS WISDOM FROM GOD.

When the sacrifices were ended, and Solomon lay down to sleep, God appeared to him in a dream. God came to encourage and to comfort young Solomon. He spoke to him, and said, "Ask, what I shall give thee." How kind God was, to promise Solomon to give him what he asked! What did Solomon choose? Did he choose riches, or possessions, or honors? No, he wanted what was better than these. He knew that worldly things must soon pass away; he wished for something which he could never, never lose. He said, "Lord, I am very young and ignorant. I have no power to teach my people in the right way. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, a wise and understanding heart; that I may know how to rule my people as it shall please thee."

Did God give Solomon what he asked? Yes; God was pleased with his choice. Solomon had asked for the best thing; heavenly wisdom, not worldly possessions. God said, "I have given thee wisdom and understanding: and I will give thee more; I will give thee what thou hast not asked; riches, and possessions, and honors: and if thou wilt serve me, and obey my commands, I will bless thee, and keep thee all thy life long." Then Solomon awoke, and found it was a dream. But how happy he felt now! God was with him; he had heard his prayer, and promised to love and bless him, and to be his friend.



THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON.

Solomon went to Jerusalem, and there offered more sacrifices to the Lord. And now he began to show his great wisdom. Two women came to the king for judgment. They had with them two little babes. One was alive and well, but the other was dead. The women were angry, and quarrelling with each other. One said, "O my lord, I and this woman live together in one house. We had each a little son. Her child died in the night; and when she found it was dead, she brought it to me, and laid it in my arms, when I was asleep, and stole away my own baby from me; and when I awoke, and looked at the dead child in my arms, I knew it was not mine." But the other cried angrily, "The living child is mine."

So they spoke before the king. It was sad to see them so angry and passionate, but what could Solomon do? How could he know the right mother of the living child? His wonderful wisdom which God had given him, helped Solomon to judge rightly. He said, "Bring me a sword." His servants brought the sword, and then Solomon said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to one woman, and half to the other." Was Solomon cruel? No, he wanted to know who was the right mother. He knew she would be very sorry to see her child killed, and would cry to have it saved; but the other woman, who was not the true mother, would not care so much. And he thought rightly. The true mother cried, "Oh, do not divide the child. Give it to the other woman, she may have it all; but O do not kill it."

But the other woman said, "Yes, let it be divided;" for she did not care much for the baby, because it was not her own child. Then Solomon said, "I know now who is the right mother of the living child. It is the woman who loves it so much that she cannot bear to have it killed. Give her the child, and let them go." So Solomon gave the living babe to the right mother, and sent the women away; and all the people wondered at Solomon's wisdom.

Was Solomon a very happy king? Yes, he had much to make him happy. He had riches, and possessions, and honors, and knowledge. Could these things make him truly happy? No, but Solomon had something more and better than all; he had God's love and blessing. Solomon was very wise; he understood many things, and wrote many learned books. He wrote about animals, and trees, and flowers. He knew the names and the histories of them all.

It is very pleasant to have much knowledge; and when we learn about the wonderful works of God, the beautiful animals and plants around us, and the sun, and moon, and stars, which we see shining so brightly in the sky, we should praise God who gave them all to us, and thank and bless him. It is right to wish for knowledge, and children ought to be very attentive to those who teach them, and very anxious to become wise. But we must not be proud of what we know.

Solomon knew more than any man ever knew, but he was not proud. None of us know much. We are all ignorant, and we ought all to be humble. God alone knows all things—the past, the present, the future—every thing, every where he knows. How wonderful God is! But

what is the best knowledge, the best wisdom? The knowledge of God and of heavenly things. All earthly wisdom must soon end; but holy, heavenly wisdom will last for ever. If we ask God for this, he will teach us more and more of it while we live; and, at last, take us to heaven, where we shall know and see things which we cannot understand here.

Solomon now began to think of David's command, and prepared to build the temple of God. He wrote to Hiram, the king of Tyre, to tell him what he wished to do. Solomon asked Hiram to send him cedar trees from Lebanon, to build the house of the Lord. Then Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, "I will do all thy wish, and give thee cedar trees and fir trees from the forest in Lebanon. My servants shall cut them down, and bring them to the sea; and I will send them by sea to the place thou shalt choose."

Then Solomon began the work directly. He sent many of his servants to Lebanon, to help Hiram's servants to cut down the trees. Then all the wood was carried to the sea, and floated down to Joppa; and there Solomon sent his people to take the wood, and bring it safely to Jerusalem. Hiram and Solomon were great friends, and they helped one another to work for God's service and glory. Those are the best friends who try to help one another to serve God.

The temple which Solomon made was a very beautiful building. It was made of cedar wood, wonderfully carved, and overlaid with gold. Within the house was the oracle, the holy place, like the holy of holies in the tabernacle, where the ark was to be placed. The oracle was divided from the other part of the house by doors, beautifully carved, and overlaid with gold and a thick veil of red, and purple, and blue hung before the oracle. Inside the oracle, Solomon put beautiful golden cherubim, like the cherubim in the tabernacle.

He made, too, an altar of brass, and a great basin or sea, with the figures of twelve oxen round the basin; and ten tables, and ten lavers, and ten golden candlesticks. These things were outside the oracle. All the holy vessels were made of gold.

When Solomon had finished the temple, he built a beautiful house for himself. He built also many cities, and a house for his queen, and a navy of ships. The ships used to go every year to distant countries, to bring back gold, and silver, and ivory, and apes, and peacocks. People in those distant lands wondered very much when they heard about Solomon's

riches and wisdom. Many came to Jerusalem to see the king, and to hear his wisdom; and they brought presents with them; gold, and silver, and garments, and spices, and horses and mules.

So Solomon became more and more rich. He had 1,400 chariots, and 2,000 horsemen. All his vessels were made of gold, and his throne was of ivory overlaid with gold. There were six steps going up to the throne, and the figures of lions upon the steps, and he had in his house many other beautiful things. He could have all he wanted, because he was so very rich.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA VISITING SOLOMON.

There was a queen who came to see Solomon from a very distant country. The country where she lived is called Sheba in the Bible. We do not now know a country named Sheba; perhaps it was in Arabia or Abyssinia. This queen heard a great deal in her own country about Solomon, and she wanted to see him. It was a long journey to Jerusalem, but she did not care for the trouble and difficulty, because she wished so much to see Solomon. She brought with her a great many servants, and camels, and gold, and spices, to give to the king. Was Solomon glad to see her? Yes, he was kind to the good queen; he showed her all his possessions; his house, and his throne, and his servants, and the temple of God.

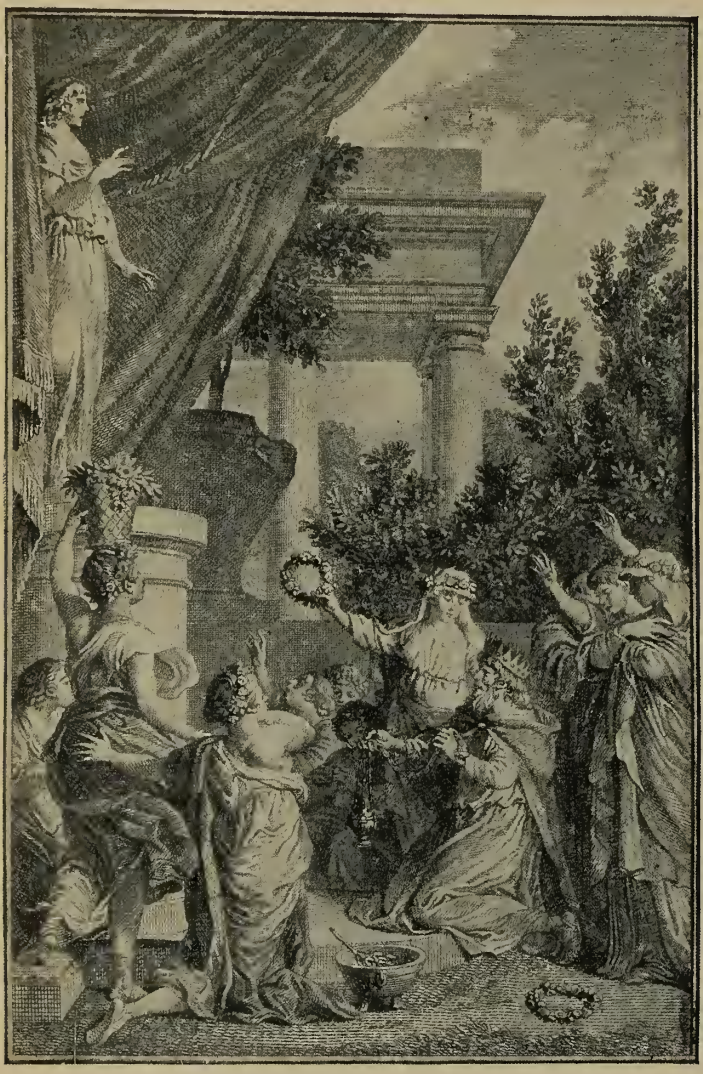
Then the queen asked him many questions, and he answered them all. He told her about the worship and service of the true God; and of all the wonderful things he did for his people Israel. This was new to the Queen of Sheba; she had never heard of these things in her own country, and she was glad to learn about them. She attended to all the king told her, and after he had finished, she said, "When I was in my own country, I heard of thy wisdom; it was very little I heard there, yet I could not then believe it; but now that I have seen all, I find thy wisdom and thy possessions are much, much greater than I thought. Happy are thy servants who stand by thee, and hear thy wisdom. Happy are the people who have thee for their king, to teach them the knowledge of God!"

Then the queen blessed and praised Solomon's God, and Solomon gave her everything she wished, and she and her servants returned to their own country. And did the good queen forget all the wise and holy things she had learned at Jerusalem; or did she try to teach her people at home what Solomon had taught her? The Bible tells us no more about her; but we may hope that she did not forget Solomon's instructions; and that she and many of her people began to serve the true God.

Solomon was now growing an old man. Did he still love and serve God more and more, like good old Samuel and David? No; we read very sad things about Solomon's old age. He turned away from the true God, who had kept and blessed him all his life, and began to worship the idols which his wicked wives worshipped. Why was this? How could this good and wise king become so wicked and so foolish? Because he was, like ourselves, weak and sinful. All his strength and goodness came from God; and when Solomon forgot to pray for help, then God's Holy Spirit went away from him; and Satan, and his own wicked heart, soon taught him to sin.

What made him forget God? Perhaps he grew proud of his riches, and power, and possessions, and wisdom, and loved them so much, and thought about them so much, that he could not love and think about God. He loved the world more and more, and God less and less; and, at last, he forsook God altogether, and God forsook him. How sad it is to love the world, and to forget God, and to lose his blessing! Was Solomon happy now? No; he had no true peace, no comfort from all his worldly things. He tried them all. He walked about in his beautiful gardens and vineyards; he gathered and ate the fruit, and smelled the sweet flowers; but soon he grew tired of them, and threw them all away.

Then he went into his fine houses, and looked at his silver and gold, and called his servants to play and sing to him. He was pleased for a little time, but soon he was weary of this too. Then he remembered his wisdom, and went to his books and studies, and he felt pleased to think how much he knew. But he could not read long; he grew tired, and put away his books, and said, "All is vanity, and sorrow, and vexation of spirit." Solomon ate and drank, but he did not care for anything; all was soon gone, and then he was unhappy and discontented again. How unhappy he was now with all his riches, and all his wisdom! He went about from place to place, crying, "Vanity! vanity! all is vanity and vexation of spirit."



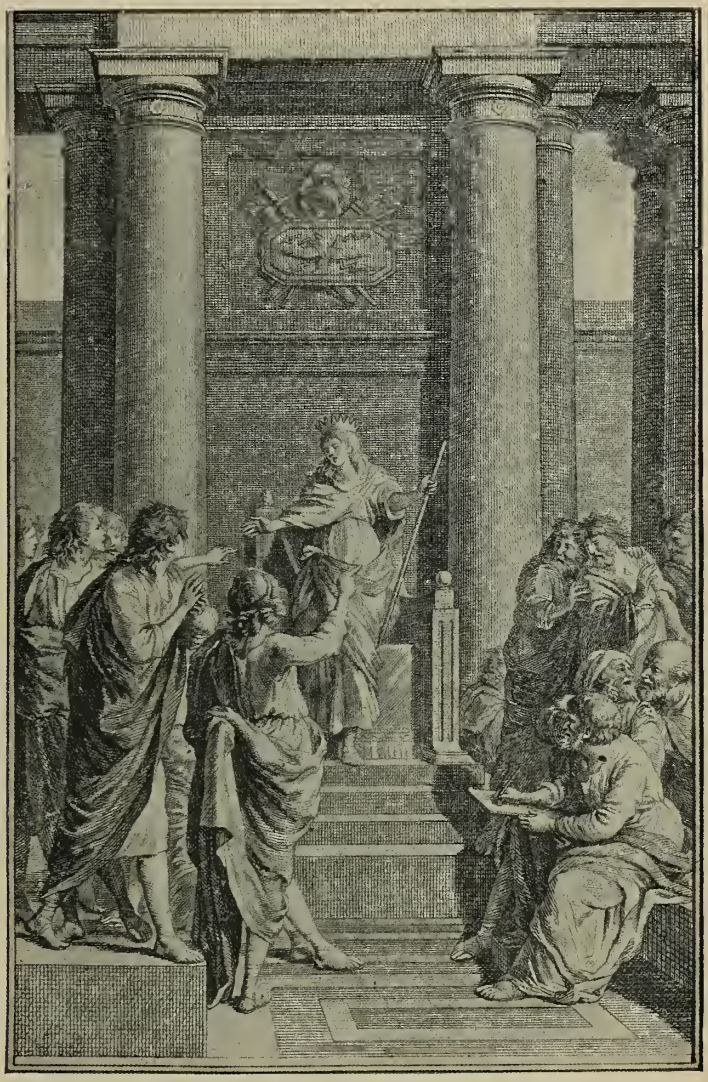
IDOLATRY OF SOLOMON AND HIS WIVES.

And why was this? Because God's blessing was not upon Solomon now; he had not God's smile to make him happy in all he did: he was not trying to serve God, he was trying only to please himself. He had everything the world could give him, but he found all to be vanity.

Did Solomon never have true peace and happiness again? Did he never repent and turn to God, and ask for forgiveness? We may hope he did. God loved Solomon, and he would not let him die in his wickedness, and perish for ever. When Solomon found that worldly things could not

comfort him, we may hope that he turned again to God, and asked for pardon; and that God forgave him all his sin, and loved, and blessed, and comforted him once more. And then Solomon felt what ought to be our great business in this world, and he said, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

Solomon reigned forty years. His riches and power could not save him from death. All must die. Rich and poor, kings and queens, and their people too—all must go down to the grave. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it."



REHOBOAM REFUSING TO REMIT TAXES.

After the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam went to Shechem, to be made king. Jeroboam heard of this, and came from Egypt, and called all Israel to him. Then Jeroboam and the people of Israel sent a very disrespectful message to Rehoboam, and said, "Thy father Solomon was unkind to us, and made hard laws which we did not like. Do thou be kind, and make easy laws, and then we will serve and obey thee."

When Rehoboam heard this message, he asked the old men, who had been his father's friends, to give him advice. The old men said, "Speak gently to the people, and then they will be thy servants, and love

and obey thee." But Rehoboam did not attend to this good advice of the old men. He called his own friends, foolish, self-willed young men, and he asked them, "What shall I do?" The young men said, "Speak harshly to the people, and tell them that the laws shall be more strict now than they were in Solomon's time." Rehoboam attended to this foolish advice, and called Jeroboam, and all Israel, and said, "My father's laws were strict, but I will make them more strict. He punished you a little, I will punish you very much." This answer made Jeroboam and the people very angry, and they said, "We will not obey Rehoboam." So the people of Israel made Jeroboam their king, and he reigned over ten tribes; but Judah and Benjamin followed Rehoboam.

But why did God take away ten tribes from Rehoboam? Because of Solomon's sin. God had not forgotten the message he sent to Jeroboam by Ahijah. All God says, he remembers, and does; and he must always punish sin.

There were two kings in the land of Canaan now, Rehoboam and Jeroboam, and they were always fighting against one another. Were they good kings? No, both were very wicked. Rehoboam was not like his father, but foolish and self-willed; and his people were wicked too, and, therefore, God's blessing was not upon them. An enemy came to fight against them, Shishak, king of Egypt, and he took many of their cities, and came to Jerusalem. Rehoboam and his people felt very much frightened when they saw Shishak coming with all his soldiers, and chariots, and horses. They had cause to fear; for God sent a very sad message to them by a prophet, to tell them how angry he was:—"Thus saith the Lord, ye have forsaken me, and now I have given you up to the power of your enemies."

Rehoboam and his people were all very sorry to hear this. What could they do? They did what was best—they humbled themselves before God. When we sin and make God angry, we ought to ask humbly for pardon. God is always willing to hear prayer. He heard the prayer of Rehoboam and his people, and said, "I will not destroy Rehoboam, because he is humble and sorry for his sin." So Jerusalem was spared, and Shishak went away; but he took with him many beautiful things which Solomon had put in the temple of the Lord.

Jeroboam was very wicked too. He taught the people to worship images, golden calves, which he put in Bethel and Dan. He would not

let his people go to Jerusalem, to worship God in the right way there; but he chose to worship in his own way, and to make priests of the people who were not Levites. This was disobedience to the command of God; for he had said that the Levites should be priests, and they alone.

One day, Jeroboam was standing by his altar at Bethel, burning incense. A prophet of God came from Judah to Bethel, and went to the altar, and cried, "O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord: there shall be born a king in Judah, named Josiah, and upon thee shall he offer the priests that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee." Then the altar was rent, and the ashes poured out, as a sign to show Jeroboam that the prophecy came from God.

DESTRUCTION OF THE ALTAR FORETOLD.

Jeroboam was angry with the prophet, for he did not like to hear that his altar should be destroyed; and he put out his hand, to lay hold of the man of God But the wicked king had no power to hurt God's prophet. The hand of Jeroboam dried up directly, so that he had no strength to move it. God smote Jeroboam, to punish him for his wickedness in trying to hurt his servant.

The king was frightened when he looked at his withered hand, and found he had no power to use it. He said humbly to the prophet, "Ask

God to forgive me, and to make my hand well again." Was the prophet willing to be kind to his enemy? Yes, he did not wish to be revengeful; he knew he ought to love and pray for his enemies. So the prophet prayed, and God mercifully heard his prayer, and made Jeroboam's hand strong and well again.

Was Jeroboam thankful to the prophet who prayed God to make his hand well again? Yes, Jeroboam said to him, "Come home with me, and rest thyself, and eat bread at my house, and I will give thee money." But the prophet said, "No, I must not go back with thee. God commanded me not to eat nor drink in this place, but to go away directly by another road." So the prophet went away, and Jeroboam returned to his house alone.

There was an old man who lived at Bethel who was a prophet too, but he was not a good man. When his sons came home that day they told him the wonderful story of the prophet who came from Judah, and prophesied about Jeroboam's altar: and of the king's hand withering when he tried to lay hold of the man of God; and how it was cured when the prophet prayed to God. The old man wondered very much to hear these things, and said, "I should like to see this prophet, and talk to him; where is he gone?" The sons showed their father the road the prophet had taken; and then the old man saddled his ass and rode after him, to seek him. Did he find him? Yes, at last he saw the prophet sitting under an oak tree.

Then the old man went to him and asked, "Art thou the prophet who came from Judah?" He said, "Yes, I am." Then the old man said, "Come home with me, and eat bread." But the prophet answered, "No, I must not; God commanded me to eat no bread and drink no water here, and I cannot disobey him." But the old man said, "I am a prophet too; and an angel appeared to me, and told me to go to thee, and bring thee home, and give thee bread to eat and water to drink."

The old man and the prophet went home together, and sat down to eat and drink. And now punishment came upon the disobedient prophet. God had seen all he did. His eye is always upon us. Wherever we go, whatever we do, he knows all. When we obey and serve him, and trust in him to guide us in all our ways, then his blessing follows us, and we are safe wherever we go. But if we are disobedient to him, and forget or rebel against his commands, then we sin against him, and his frown is upon us, and not his smile.

God sent a message to the old man, while they were all sitting at table. It was a very sad message. The old man cried to the prophet, "Thus saith the Lord: because thou hast disobeyed the command of God thou shalt not go to thy home again; but thou shalt die by the way, and thy body shall not be buried in thy father's tomb." The poor prophet saw now how dangerous it is to disobey God.

When they had finished eating, the prophet saddled his ass and went away. He looked up and saw a lion in the road coming to meet him. God sent that lion: it came to punish the disobedient prophet; and it rushed upon him and killed him in a moment. But the lion did not hurt the ass, nor devour the dead body of the man.

THE PROPHET SLAIN BY A LION.

The people who passed by soon came and told the sad story to the old prophet. He knew why the man of God was slain, and he felt very sorry, and went directly to the place where the lion had killed him. What did he see there? The poor prophet's dead body lying on the road, and the lion and the ass standing by it. The old man took up the dead body and laid it on his ass, and carried it home. Then he put it in his own tomb, and mourned over it, and cried, "Alas! my brother."

He said to his sons, "When I die bury me by the man of God.

Lay my bones by his bones. I know that what he prophesied about the altar of Bethel shall all be found true." The old prophet believed the word of God.

We now come again to the history of a very good king. His name was Asa; he was king of Judah, and son of Abijah. When Asa began to reign, he found his people very ignorant of God. They had learnt to be idolaters; to worship images and new gods, and not their own God, the true God, who made all things. But when Asa was king, he knew it was his duty to teach his people the right way. So he threw down all the idol-altars, and the images, and commanded Judah to seek the Lord.

Was there rest in Judah all the years that Asa reigned? No: all countries, and people, everywhere, must have trouble sometimes; and Asa had his troubles. Enemies came to fight against him. They were very, very many, and they came with chariots and horses, and made ready for battle. Was Asa frightened? Perhaps he was at first; but he knew where to find help. Did he trust in his soldiers, and his armor, and his strong cities? No, Asa knew that all these things could not help him.

There was no power in them; but the good king went to God and asked for his help. He prayed and said, "Lord, we trust in thee to help us; we have no power in ourselves; but we know that thou wilt hear us, and fight our enemies for us, and then we shall have the victory. Thou art our God; in thy name we go to fight against this army of our enemies." Then Asa and his people felt safe and happy, because they knew that God would hear and answer their prayer. And so he did. He smote their enemies, and gave Asa and his people the victory.

Asa was growing an old man. He had had many happy and peaceful years, but now trouble came again. The king of Israel and his army fought against him. Did Asa remember the kindness of God in past times? Did he go to him again for safety? No, Asa forgot to do this; he did not now trust in God, but he went to the king of Syria, and asked help from him. The king of Syria was very willing to help Asa. He sent captains and soldiers to fight for him, and soon the Israelites were conquered.

But Asa had displeased God, because he had trusted more in the king of Syria than he had trusted in the Lord; and therefore a prophet was sent to Asa to tell him how angry God was. Asa had sinned, and God must punish him. The prophet said, "Thou hast done foolishly.

Thou hast trusted in the king of Syria, and not in God. Now thou shalt have wars, and battles, and fighting in thy kingdom, all the rest of thy life" This was sad news for Asa. He had been foolish and wicked too. When we are in trouble, God alone can give us true help and comfort. How foolish and ungrateful we are when we forget this!

The rest of Asa's life was not happy, as it had been before. When people forget and disobey God they cannot be happy. Asa was not humbled when he heard God's message to him. He did not, like David, confess his sin directly and ask for forgiveness. No, Asa was very angry with the prophet who told him what God said. This was still more wrong in Asa.

HANANI IMPRISONED FOR REBUKING ASA.

The prophet spoke as God commanded, and Asa should have attended humbly to the message he brought, and prayed to be enabled to do better in future. Asa, in his anger, shut up the faithful prophet in a prison, where he could speak to him no more. But God's message was true, and Asa suffered from wars all the rest of his life, while the poor prophet was alone and sorrowful in his prison.

# THE STORY OF ELIJAH.

AHAB was king after Omri's death. He was more wicked than any of the kings who reigned before him in Israel. His wife's name was Jezebel, and she encouraged her husband in his sins and idolatries. They both worshipped Baal, and taught their people to worship him too. Were all the Israelites idolaters now? Was there none to teach them about God? Were there no holy prophets in Israel still? There were yet a few faithful servants of God; and a holy prophet was living in the country, who boldly preached the truth to the people of Israel. This prophet was Elijah. The Bible tells us many wonderful and beautiful stories about him.

ELIJAH'S PROPHECY AGAINST AHAB.

God told Elijah to go to king Ahab, and say, that he would send no rain, and no dew, upon the land of Israel for a long time. Israel had forgotten their kind and merciful God who gave them all their good things. They did not thank him for his blessings; they did not ask him for the food they needed: they were worshipping Baal, not God; and, therefore, God punished his ungrateful people by taking away their blessings. He taught them, in this way, that

he alone could give them their good things, and that he could take all away too, if he pleased.

This was a sad time for Israel. No rain fell to water the ground; so the grass dried up, and then there was no food for the poor animals; and no corn, nor fruits, for the people to eat. A famine is a dreadful thing. But where was Elijah now? God took care of him; he told him where to go, and how he should be fed. There was a little brook of water near Jordan named Cherith, and God told Elijah to go and hide himself there. Why must he hide himself? Because Elijah had enemies who were seeking to kill him. Ahab and Jezebel hated him, because he told them the truth, and spoke to them about their sins, and warned them of God's anger. It was right of Elijah to tell them all this; but wicked people love their sins, and do not like to be reproved for them. Ahab and Jezebel hated all God's holy prophets, and sought for them to put them to death: but Elijah was safely kept by God at the brook Cherith.

What did he eat there? There was no corn, nor fruit; yet he had plenty every day. Who gave him his daily food? God sent it to him in a very wonderful way. Not by a friend, nor a prophet, nor a servant, nor an angel. God sent it to him every day by ravens. Every morning the ravens came to Elijah. One carried flesh in its beak; another carried bread. The ravens did not eat the food themselves. They brought it to Elijah; and he took it from them, and then they flew away; and every evening the ravens came again, and brought more bread and flesh to Elijah; and when he was thirsty he drank the water of the brook. He was alone; only God was with him: but Elijah was happy.

There was a man named Naboth, who lived in Jezreel, and had a vineyard there, very near king Ahab's palace. It was a very pleasant garden; and the king often looked at it, and said, "I wish that garden were mine." But Naboth would not sell his vineyard, because it was the inheritance appointed for him by God; and he said to Ahab, "I cannot give my father's inheritance to thee." When the king heard this, he was angry: and when he went home, he sat sullenly without speaking; and when food was brought to him, he sent it away, and would not eat it.

When Jezebel saw how displeased Ahab was, she asked, "Why art thou so sad that thou eatest no bread?" Then Ahab said, "Because I asked Naboth to let me buy his vineyard, and he will not part with it." Ahab was lying idly on his bed, for he was so angry he would do nothing;

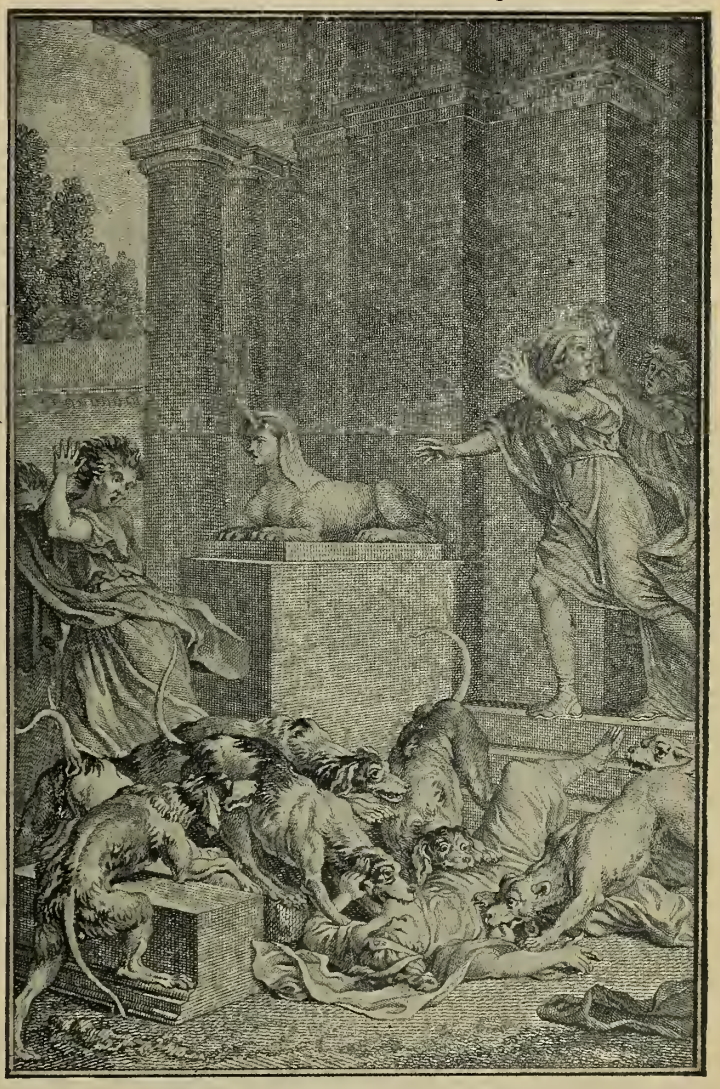
but now Jezebel said to him, "Arise, and eat, and be merry, and I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth." Wicked Jezebel had no right to do this; the vineyard did not belong to her; but she was not afraid of doing wrong, or of making God angry. So she wrote letters, and sealed them with Ahab's seal, and sent them to the nobles who lived at Jezreel.

AHAB ACCUSED OF THE DEATH OF NABOTH.

What did she say in the letters? She wrote, "Take Naboth, and bring him out before the people; and let two men accuse him of rebellion against God and the king; and then carry him away, and stone him, that he may die." This wicked command came to the nobles in Jezreel; and after they had read it, they went to Naboth's house, and brought him out before the people to be judged. Had Naboth done wrong? No; but the nobles sent for two wicked men who wrongfully accused him, and said, "Naboth has rebelled against God, and against the king." These wicked men forgot the ninth commandment, in which it is said, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." But the nobles attended to what the false witnesses said, and they brought out Naboth, and stoned him with stones till he died. Then they sent to the queen and said, "Naboth is dead."

Jezebel was glad to hear this; and she ran directly, and told Ahab,

and said, "Go and take possession of the vineyard. Naboth cannot take it away from thee now, for he is stoned and dead." Then Ahab was pleased and arose directly, and went to Jezreel. But God had seen all this wickedness. He knew all Ahab's selfishness, and all Jezebel's deceit and cruelty. He had heard the lies of the false witnesses, and seen Naboth die; and now he called Elijah, and sent him with a fearful message to Ahab at Jezreel. The wicked king was walking in the vineyard; he felt pleased that he could possess it; and he thought he was safe now that Naboth was dead.



JEZEBEL DEVOURED BY DOGS.

But soon Ahab saw Elijah coming to meet him, and he felt very much frightened; for he knew Elijah was sent to him by God. All his possessions could not make Ahab feel safe and happy now. He said to Elijah, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" Elijah answered, "Yes, I have found thee. God has seen thy sin, and he has sent a message to thee by me. All thy family shall be destroyed, like the families of Jeroboam and Baasha. In the place where Naboth was killed, the dogs shall lick thy blood, and eat the flesh of Jezebel. All this shall come upon thee, because of thine idolatry, and wickedness, and rebellion against God."

Ahab was frightened when he heard this message. His pleasure

was all gone; and he went home sorrowfully, and rent his clothes, and ate no food, and spoke humbly and gently. Ahab's repentance and humility soon ended. He was not really sorry for sin, and he did not ask for pardon. But God was so merciful that when he saw Ahab humbling himself before him, he said, "I will spare Ahab a little longer. I will not punish his family now."

Who was now king of Judah? Asa was dead, and his son Jehoshaphat reigned in Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat was a good man like his father; but he was friendly with wicked Ahab, and came to see him at Samaria. The Syrians were fighting again against Israel, and Ahab wished very much to go to Ramoth-Gilead, and take it back from the king of Syria; and he asked Jehoshaphat to go with him. The king of Judah was very willing to go: he said, "I am as thou art; my people as thy people; my horses as thy horses." Was this right? No; Jehoshaphat was a servant of God, and Ahab was a wicked idolater; and it is wrong for God's people to choose their friends among Satan's people, and to love their company.

Jehoshaphat did not like to go to the battle without asking God's blessing: and he wished Ahab to ask the prophets to tell them the word of the Lord. There were many wicked prophets in Israel then; and Ahab called for some of these, and asked, "Shall I go to Ramoth-Gilead or no?" Then they all said, "Yes, go; God will give the city into thy hand." But Jehoshaphat feared that these wicked prophets were deceiving Ahab; so he said, "Is there not a prophet of the Lord here? Let us ask of him." Then Ahab answered, "Yes; there is one man, named Micaiah; but I do not like him, because he always prophesies evil about me, and not good." But Jehoshaphat still wished to see Micaiah, so Ahab sent a messenger to call him.

When the messenger came to Micaiah, he said, "Go now to Ahab, and prophesy as the other prophets do; they all tell Ahab to go to Ramoth-Gilead to conquer; speak like them; try to please the king; do not make him angry." But Micaiah answered, "I shall speak the truth which God tells me to speak." Micaiah was not afraid of Ahab's anger; but he was very much afraid of making God angry, by speaking lies and deceit. Pray that you, like good Micaiah, may never be afraid of speaking the truth.

The two kings were sitting upon their thrones, dressed in their robes; and all the wicked prophets stood and prophesied before them.

The prophets said, "Go to Ramoth-Gilead, and conquer; God shall give it into the king's hand." When Micaiah came in, Ahab said to him, "Tell me now the truth; shall I go to Ramoth-Gilead, and fight and conquer there, or no?"

Then Micaiah began to tell Ahab the fearful message God had sent to him. He said, "I saw, in a vision, the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the holy angels standing around him. And the Lord said, Who will tempt Ahab to go to Ramoth-Gilead, that he may fall and die there? Then a wicked spirit came to the Lord, and said, I will tempt Ahab to go to Ramoth-Gilead. I will teach his prophets to lie, and deceive him; and they shall persuade him to go. And the Lord said to the wicked spirit, Go, and do as thou hast said."

MICAIAH PROPHESYING AGAINST AHAB.

Then Micaiah turned to Ahab, and said, "These prophets who stand around, are lying prophets. The wicked spirit I saw in the vision, has taught them to deceive; they are tempting thee to go to the battle, and thou shalt fall and die there; for God himself has spoken evil about thee." Then Ahab grew very angry; and one of the wicked prophets struck Micaiah on the face, and laughed at what he said. Ahab turned to his servants, and said, "Take Micaiah away, and put him in prison, and feed

him with bread and water, till I return in peace." But Micaiah said, "Thou wilt never return in peace again;" and then he turned to the people, and said, "Hearken, O people, every one of you."

The good prophet was carried to his prison: and wicked Ahab went with Jehoshaphat to Ramoth-Gilead. But Micaiah was happy and peaceful in the prison, because God was with him there to bless and comfort him. He was more happy than Ahab; for Ahab felt frightened and uncomfortable, because he knew that he was doing wrong, and that God's blessing was not with him.

When the two kings and their armies came to the battle-field, Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself when I go to fight; but put thou on thy robes." Ahab was afraid the Syrians would try to kill him; and he thought he should be safer in disguise, because no one could know him then. When the Syrians saw Jehoshaphat in his robes, they said, "That is the king of Israel; let us fight him, and kill him." But Jehoshaphat cried, "No, I am not Ahab; I am the king of Judah;" so the Syrians turned away, for they did not want to kill Jehoshaphat. Could they find Ahab? They did not know him in his disguise; but God saw him all the time: Ahab could not hide himself from his eye.

One of the Syrians drew a bow, and let the arrow fly. The Syrian could not tell where the arrow might go, nor whom it might shoot: but God knew; he directed the arrow, and it smote Ahab to the heart in his chariot, where he was sitting in disguise. The king felt that he must soon die, and he said to the man who drove the chariot, "Carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded." His friends followed him, and held him up in his chariot, and tried to heal the wound; but they could not cure their master; he died in the evening, and they carried the dead body home to Samaria, and buried it.

When the battle with the Syrians was ended, Jehoshaphat went home in peace to Jerusalem. Was God pleased with all that Jehoshaphat had done? No; a prophet came, and said to him, "God is angry with thee, because thou hast helped the ungodly, and loved the enemies of the Lord." But God forgave Jehoshaphat, because he repented of his sin; he did really love the Lord, and try to serve him. His ungodly friend was dead now, and Jehoshaphat was in his own kingdom; and he taught the people in the right way, and would not let them worship idols.

But Jehoshaphat had some enemies to fight. Who were they? The

Moabites and the Ammonites; and they came in very great numbers. Jehoshaphat was afraid; but he knew what he ought to do in his danger: he sought the Lord himself, and he commanded his people to fast, and to seek God too. The king, and all his people, went to the temple; and there they prayed for help. Jehoshaphat remembered, that when Solomon had dedicated that house, he had asked God to hear the prayers which his people should pray when they were in trouble.

They were in trouble now, and they went to the temple to ask for God's help. All the people stood before the Lord, with their wives, and their little children; and then the good king prayed, and said, "Lord, we know not what to do; but our trust is in thee." Did God attend to these good people? Yes; while they were praying, God's Spirit came upon a Levite named Jahaziel, and he spoke to them, and said, "Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid. The battle is not yours, but God's. To-morrow you must go down to your enemies; but you need not fight them; you may stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. Fear not, for he is with you."

JEHOSHAPHAT'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE.

Then Jehoshaphat bowed down to the ground in thankfulness and reverence, and all the people worshipped; and afterwards, they stood up,

and sang praises to God. They sang with a loud voice, because they felt so happy, and so thankful to God. They knew that he was their friend, and they did not fear. How pleasant it is to have God for our friend when we are in trouble and danger!

Next day, all the people rose very early to go to the battle: but before they went, Jehoshaphat called them and said, "Believe in the Lord your God; trust in him and all will be well, and he will give you the victory." Then the good king commanded the singers to go before the army, to praise God, and to give him thanks. It was a beautiful sight. First, the singers went, praising God in their holy psalms and hymns; and then followed King Jehoshaphat and all his army, not frightened and trembling, but bold and full of courage.

When they came to the place where their enemies were, what did they see? The Ammonites and Moabites were all lying dead upon the ground; there was not one there to hurt Judah. But who had killed them? Not Jehoshaphat; not his army: it was God himself who had subdued them all. When the people began to sing their psalms of praise, God began to save them from their enemies. The Ammonites, and Moabites, and the people of Mount Seir had quarrelled and fought one against another, till all were killed; and when Judah came to the battle, they found no enemies left to conquer. So they went to the dead bodies, and took off all the fine things that were upon them.

There was so much spoil that Jehoshaphat and his soldiers were three days gathering it. When they had finished, they all came together, and blessed and thanked God for subduing their enemies; and then they went home to Jerusalem, to the temple, playing on harps and trumpets, and shouting for joy. All the countries round heard about this wonderful victory; and they feared God very much, for they saw how powerful he was. God gave rest and peace to Jehoshaphat, because he trusted in him alone, and not in his own strength. God is now as powerful as he was then; and he is still willing to hear his people's prayers, and to comfort and save them in all their troubles.

Elijah knew that the time was near when he should be taken to heaven; and he and his servant Elisha went from Gilgal. Elijah was going to see some of his dear friends for the last time, and to bid them farewell. When they had gone a little way Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here now, for the Lord has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha answered,

"No, I will not leave thee;" so they both came to Bethel. Did they talk as they walked along? Yes; Elijah told his faithful servant that he was going away from him soon; he was going to heaven; but Elisha must stay on earth a little longer. This made Elisha love his dear master still more; for he thought, "I shall not have him with me long; he will soon go away from me. I will not leave him now. I must stay with him and hear all his last words."

There was a school at Bethel for the sons of the prophets; and when the young prophets saw Elijah and Elisha coming they ran to them, and said to Elisha, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master to-day?" Elisha did not wish them to speak about it; so he said softly, "Yes, I know it;" and walked on with Elijah. Then Elijah said, "Stay here, for God has sent me to Jericho." But Elisha answered, "No, I cannot leave thee;" and they both went on to Jericho.

JEHOSHAPHAT'S VICTORY.

There was another school at Jericho; and the sons of the prophets came, and said to Elisha, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master to-day?" Elisha said, "Yes, I know it; hold your peace." Then Elijah told Elisha that God had sent him to Jordan; but Elisha still kept close to his dear master, and said, "I cannot, I will not leave thee;" so they came together to

Jordan. Elijah took off his mantle, and smote the waters with it; and the waters divided, and Elijah and Elisha went over on dry ground. Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask now what shall I give thee; what shall I do for thee before I go away?"

Elijah had not any worldly possessions to give; and Elisha did not want them; for he knew they could not make him happy. But Elisha wanted to be like his master; he wanted to be a holy prophet of the Lord; so he said, "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." It was God's Spirit that made Elijah so holy, and that taught him to prophesy, and to do the wonderful things we have been reading about. Could Elijah give the Holy Spirit to Elisha? No; for that is the gift of God alone; but Elijah could ask God to give his Spirit to Elisha.

THE TRANSLATION OF ELIJAH.

Elijah said, "Thou hast asked a hard thing: but if thou see me taken up, thou shalt have thy wish; but if not, thou shalt not have it." Elisha asked for a good gift; may we ask for it too? Yes; ask him. Not the wonderful spirit of prophecy which he gave to Elijah; God does not now give that to his people; but the Spirit to cleanse and renew our hearts, and to make us pure and holy.

God promises to give his Holy Spirit to all who

Elijah and Elisha still went on, and talked one to the other, for they had much to say. Elijah was giving his last advice, and Elisha was very attentive to all his words, for he knew that he should never hear his master speak again. But while they were talking, a bright chariot of fire appeared, and horses of fire. They came from heaven to carry up Elijah safely there. Elijah was parted from Elisha in a moment. Elisha looked up, and he saw his dear master in the bright chariot, going to heaven in joy and triumph, and he cried, "O, my father, my father!" But very soon Elisha could see his master no more. He was gone far away, above the clouds, and the blue sky, to a world which Elisha's eye could not see.

## THE STORY OF ELISHA.

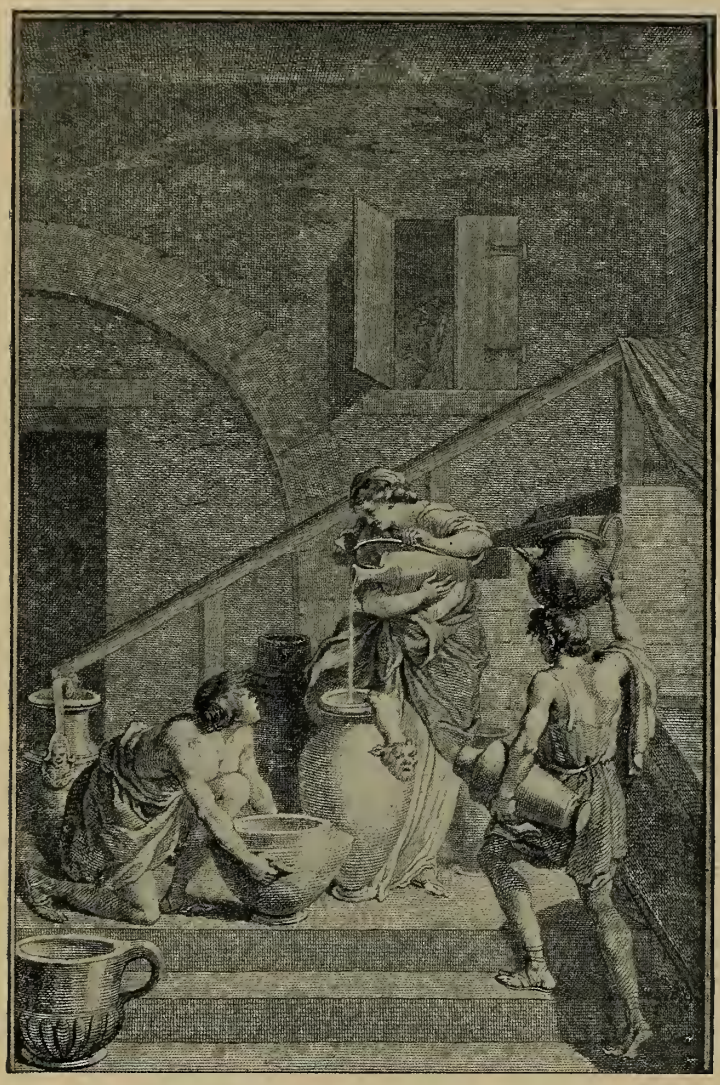
ONE day, a poor woman came to Elisha in great trouble. Her husband was dead. He was one of the sons of the prophets; a good man, but very poor. He owed money, and died before he could pay his debts. If this good man had lived longer, he would, no doubt, have tried very hard to earn money to pay what he owed. It is not right to be in debt. The Bible says, "Owe no man anything." But the poor man was now dead, and could do nothing; and when the creditor came to ask for the money, the widow had none to give him.

Then the creditor said, "If I cannot have the debt paid, I must take away thy two sons, and sell them for slaves." The poor woman cried very much when she heard this. She had lost her husband, and now must she lose her children also? She did not know how to get money to pay the debt; so she went to Elisha, and told her trouble to him. The prophet was very kind, and willing to help her. Did he help her to escape from her creditor without paying the debt? or did he pay the money for her himself? No; Elisha told her she must try to earn the money.

When people are in debt, they should always try to pay their creditors. It is very dishonest to run away without paying; it is like stealing. But what could the poor widow do? Elisha asked, "What hast thou in the house?" The woman answered, "I have only a pot of oil." Then Elisha told her to go to all her neighbors, and ask them to lend her some empty vessels.

The woman obeyed, and soon she brought home a great many; for her friends were very kind, and willing to lend the vessels. But what was

she to do with all these vessels? Elisha told her. He said, "Go to thine house, and shut the doors. Then take the pot of oil, and pour out into the empty vessels." The woman and her sons did as Elisha said. Vessel after vessel they filled with oil; but the oil in the pot did not grow less; God multiplied it, as he did the oil and the meal of the poor widow at Zarephath. At last, all the vessels were full of oil.



ELISHA MULTIPLYING THE WIDOW'S OIL.

Then the woman went and told Elisha, and asked, "What must I do now?" Elisha said, "Go, and sell the oil, and pay the debt with the money; and then, thou and thy children may live upon what is left." The widow must pay her debt *first*. She must first think about her duty to her creditor, and afterwards about herself and her children. The oil was soon sold; and the widow had then plenty of money; and she went directly and paid her debt.

Elisha used often to go to a place named Shunem, where a good woman lived who was very rich. This woman loved God; and as she knew that Elisha was a prophet of God, she loved and honored him too. One day, when she saw Elisha passing by, she ran and called him into her house, and gave him food to refresh him on his journey. Elisha went to Shunem many times afterwards, and he always turned into the house where the good woman and her husband lived.

They were glad to see him, because he was a holy man; and he talked about God and heaven, and taught them many good and holy things. The kind Shunammite prepared a little room in her house for Elisha. She put in it for him, a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick; and when Elisha wanted to be quiet, and to read and think alone, he used to go into this little room.

What could Elisha do for this contented woman? What did she want? Gehazi, Elisha's servant, said, "She has no child; perhaps she would like a son." Then Elisha asked God to give a little son to this good Shunammite, to comfort her, and make her happy. He knew God would hear his prayer, and he called the woman, and said to her, "Very soon, God will give thee a son." The woman wondered when Elisha told her this; but God attended to Elisha's prayer, and soon after the little boy was born.

The mother was much pleased to have this dear child, and very thankful to God who gave him to her. The little boy grew, and soon he could run about, and talk, and learn many things. One day, in harvest time, his mother sent him into the fields where his father was, to see the men reaping the corn. The little boy was much pleased to stand there by his dear father, and looked at the beautiful yellow corn. It was a very hot day. The sun shone brightly, and it struck the head of the little boy, and made him feel very sick; and he cried to his father, "My head, my head!"

He was in great pain, and could not stay longer in the fields: so his kind father called a lad, and said, "Carry the child to his mother." She took him on her lap, and nursed him, and kissed him, and did all she could for him; but he grew worse and worse; and, after a few hours, he died in her arms.

When the mother saw that her little boy was dead, she carried him up into Elisha's room, and laid him upon the bed. Then she told the servant to saddle an ass directly, and to ride with her to Mount Carmel. Why? Because she wanted to see Elisha, and to tell her sorrows to him. This woman had great faith in God; she knew he could raise her child to life again if he pleased. She took a long journey; and when she came near to Mount Carmel, Elisha saw her, and sent Gehazi to meet her.

Then Gehazi ran to her, and asked, "Is all well? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child?" The mother answered, "Yes, all is well." She knew all was right, because done by God. Though

he had taken away her child, yet she knew all was "well." When the Shunammite came to Elisha, she ran and caught him by the feet; she was so full of sorrow she could not speak.

Gehazi wanted to push her away; but Elisha said, "No, she is unhappy, and we must be kind and gentle to her." Elisha soon understood what it was that made her sorry; and then he told Gehazi to go before very quickly to the Shunammite's house, and lay his staff upon the child's face. Gehazi obeyed. He went to the house, and into the room where the little dead boy lay, and put his master's staff upon the child's face.

ELISHA RESTORING THE CHILD TO LIFE.

But there was no voice; the child could not see, nor hear, nor speak to Gehazi. Then Gehazi went to meet his master, who was following slowly with the poor mother, and said, "The child is not awaked." So Elisha came on to the house, and then he went alone into his room, and looked at the child. He was dead. The staff was upon his face, but the staff had no power to make him live; and Elisha himself had no power; God alone could raise the child to life again. Elisha knew this; so he shut the door, and prayed to the Lord. Then he went and lay upon the child, and soon the child began to grow warm.

At last the child sneezed; and then Elisha knew that he was alive, and that God had heard his prayer. The little boy sneezed again seven times, and opened his eyes. Then Elisha called the Shunammite; and when she came in, he showed her the child alive and well, and said, "Take up thy son." The mother bowed herself down to the ground in thankfulness, and took up the child and went out.

The king of Syria had a captain over his army named Naaman. Naaman was a very rich man; and his master loved and honored him, because he was brave, and fought his battles for him; so Naaman had much to make him happy; but there was one thing which spoilt all his joys and pleasures. What was it? Naaman was a leper. We have read before about the leprosy, and what a dreadful disease it was. There was no cure for the leprosy. No medicine, no physician, could cleanse it. God alone could take it away.

But Naaman knew nothing of God. He was an idolater. The king of Syria and all his people were idolaters. Naaman was sick and sorrowful and he had nothing to comfort him. Some time before the Syrians had fought with Israel, and taken prisoner a little Israelitish girl, and brought her to Syria. The little maid was taken to Naaman's house, and she waited upon his wife. She was a very obedient and gentle little girl. She tried to please her mistress, and was always respectful and kind to her. Her master and mistress were kind to her; and the little maid loved them, and felt grateful to them.

When she saw her master suffering so much, she was very sorry, and she thought, "I wish I could help my master." Then she remembered that there were lepers in her own country. She had heard of the laws about the leprosy; and she knew, too, that Israel's God had power to cure it. And she recollected Elisha, and all the miracles he had done, and she thought, "God gives great power to Elisha." We shall soon see how God blessed this little maid, and how useful he made her to her master.

One day, when the little girl was waiting upon her mistress, she said, "I wish my master could see the prophet who is in Samaria. God gives great power to that prophet. He has done many wonderful things. He would cure my master of his leprosy." Her mistress was surprised; but she sent and told Naaman what the little maid had said. Naaman was glad to hear that he could be cured; and his master, the king of Syria, was glad too. He called Naaman and said, "Go to the land of

Israel; I will give thee a letter for the king there, and he will tell thee how to be cured of thy leprosy."

So Naaman made ready his horses, and chariots, and servants, and went to Samaria. How glad the little maid was to see her master go! She hoped that soon he would come home again cleansed and cured of his leprosy. Perhaps she prayed that her master might learn to worship the God of Israel, and give up his idols; for if the little girl loved God herself, she must have wished all her friends to love him too.

NAAMAN CURED OF HIS LEPROSY.

Naaman now made all ready for his journey; he took the king of Syria's letter, and a present for the king of Israel, and went to Samaria. Elisha soon heard that Naaman was come and said, "Send him to me; I will show him that there is a God in Israel."

The good prophet did not go out to see Naaman, and to admire and honor him; but he sent his servant to him with this message: "Go, and wash seven times in Jordan, and thou shalt be clean." Did Naaman obey? No; it was a very easy command, but Naaman did not like it. Why not? Because he thought Elisha had not honored him. He said, "Why did not the prophet come out to me, and call upon his God, and put his hand upon me, and cure the leprosy? Why must I wash in Jordan?

Can the waters of Jordan cure me? I have better rivers in Damascus, in my own country. May I not wash in them, and be clean?" So he turned, and went away in a rage.

Naaman was too proud to be cured in God's way; but God would not cure Naaman in *his* way. It was not Jordan's waters that had power to cleanse the leprosy; God alone could cure it; but Naaman was to obey God's command, and to submit to his will, and to have faith in him; and then God promised to cure him; but not while Naaman was disobedient and rebellious, and proud. Naaman still suffered from his leprosy; and it was his own fault; because he was too proud to obey Elisha's easy command.

But the servants of Naaman were sorry to see their master so angry. They wished him to be well; and they knew that he could not be cured if he did not obey the prophet's command. So the servants came to Naaman, and spoke to him very respectfully, because he was their master, but very affectionately too, because they loved him as their friend. The servants said to Naaman, "My father, if the prophet had told thee to do a great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? But he has told thee to do a very easy thing; wash, and be clean: wilt thou not obey this easy command?"

Naaman attended to what his servants said. He felt that they were right, and that he had done wrong in so proudly going away from Elisha's door. And Naaman was humble now. He was willing to be cured in God's way, not in his own proud way: so he went to the river Jordan, and dipped himself in it seven times, as Elisha had told him, and was cured.

The king of Syria now came to fight against Joram, king of Israel. The king of Syria pitched his camp, hoping that he might take his enemy by surprise; but Elisha sent many times to Joram, and warned him not to go to the place where the Syrians were; so Joram saved himself from his enemies. This troubled the king of Syria very much; and he called his servants, and said, "Tell me who it is that does this? Who tells the king of Israel where I pitch my camp?" The servants answered, "It is Elisha the prophet. He knows all the secret things thou doest, and tells them to the king of Israel."

Then the king of Syria was very angry with Elisha; and he made ready his chariots, and horses, and a great army, and sent them to Dothan, where Elisha was, to take him prisoner. When the soldiers came to Dothan it was night. None saw them coming; all were asleep: so the

army surrounded the city, and waited till morning. Elisha's servant rose very early that morning, and went out; and he saw the city surrounded with horses, and chariots, and soldiers, all enemies of the good prophet.

The servant was very much frightened; and he cried, and said, "Alas, my master! what shall we do?" Was Elisha frightened? No; he knew that God had more power than all his enemies, and trusted in God to take care of him in this danger; and then he felt safe and happy. And then Elisha spoke to his servant, and said to him, "Fear not; there are more with us than with our enemies;" for Elisha saw what the servant could not see; a wonderful and beautiful sight which comforted him, and made him feel safe.

THE SYRIANS SMITTEN WITH BLINDNESS.

Then Elisha prayed that the servant might be able to see this wonderful sight too; and God heard Elisha's prayer, and opened the young man's eyes; and then he saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. These chariots and horses were sent to protect Elisha from his enemies. Who sent them? God himself. His holy angels in heaven are always ready to help and protect his people on earth. Elisha's enemies could not see this heavenly host; but God gave Elisha and his servant power to see them.

But what did Elisha do when his enemies came to take him prisoner? Again he asked help of God: he asked him to smite his enemies with blindness; and God did so. The Syrians became blind and helpless; and then they had no power to hurt Elisha. So Elisha came to them and said, "Follow me, and I will bring you to the man you seek." Then he led them into Samaria.

The poor blind men did not know where they were going; but when they were come to Samaria, Elisha asked God to open their eyes again; and God gave sight to the Syrians. What did they see? They saw themselves surrounded by their enemies. The king of Israel was there, and all his army. Elisha was close to them; but they were afraid to take him now. Then the king said to Elisha, "Shall I smite them? Shall I smite them?" But Elisha did not want revenge; he had used his power only to protect himself from his enemies; and he did not wish to punish them any more. He was willing to forgive all their unkindness to him.

So he said to the king of Israel, "No, we must not kill them. God gave them into my power that I might save myself; but I do not wish to hurt them. Let us give them bread to eat, and water to drink, and send them home to their master." Then Elisha made a great feast for the Syrians; and when they had finished eating and drinking, he let them go back in peace to the king of Syria.

The king of Israel soon followed the messenger to Elisha's house; but he did not come now to hurt the prophet. Joram was in despair, for he thought that he and his people must soon all perish with hunger. But God can send help in the greatest troubles, and he was now going to send help to Israel. So Elisha, at God's command, said to the king, "Hear what God says: To-morrow flour and barley shall be sold in plenty in Samaria." This was good news for Joram and his people, but they did not all believe what Elisha said.

There was a lord with the king, a nobleman of Israel, and the king leaned upon his arm as he stood by Elisha. This lord did not believe that there should be plenty of food in Samaria next day. He thought such a thing was too wonderful even for God to do; and he answered Elisha very disrespectfully, and said, "No, this cannot be; I will not believe it;" he forgot that everything is possible with God.

Then Elisha turned to the unbelieving nobleman, and said, "Thou shalt see the food to-morrow with thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat of it."

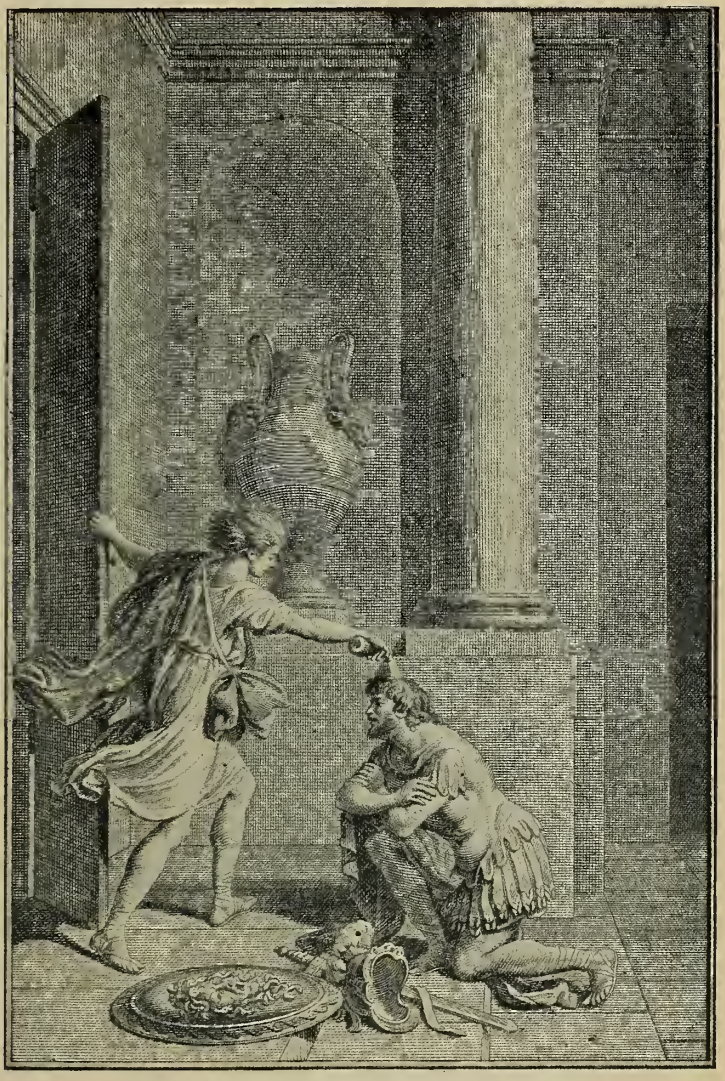
The nobleman did not care for what Elisha said; but God remembered his sin, and soon punished him for it. And God remembered also his promise to give plenty of food next day to the poor hungry people in Samaria. That night he put fear into the hearts of the Syrians, so that they thought they heard a noise of horses, and chariots, and a great army. There was nothing to make them afraid; all was still; but God could fill them with fear, when no earthly enemy was near to hurt them.

THE UNBELIEVER TRODDEN TO DEATH.

So they said one to another, "The king of Israel is coming against us, and all his soldiers, and the king of Egypt is coming too, and many more kings, and very great armies with them; what shall we do?" Then they all arose, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, and gold and silver, and garments, and food; and escaped for their lives.

But where was the unbelieving lord? The king commanded him to stand at the gate and keep it. Multitudes of people passed by, carrying food in plenty; and this lord saw that Elisha had spoken truth. But the great plenty in Samaria did no good to that unbelieving nobleman. He did not live to enjoy it. The crowds of people pressed upon him, and threw him down; and he fell, and was trodden under foot, and died, as Elisha had said.

Elisha called one of the sons of the prophets, and gave him a message from God. Elisha said to the young man, "Go now quickly to Ramoth-Gilead. Take a box of oil in thine hand; and when thou comest to Ramoth-Gilead, seek there for a man named Jehu, and call him to thee, and take him into a room alone, and pour the oil upon his head, and make him king over Israel. Then open the door and flee." The young prophet obeyed Elisha at once. He did not wait to ask why, nor murmur at the command. The sons of the prophets were taught obedience.



JEHU ANOINTED KING OF ISRAEL.

The young prophet went to Ramoth-Gilead, and soon found Jehu. Jehu was a captain of the army, and he was sitting with the other captains when the prophet came to him. Jehu was not thinking about being king; he did not know how God was now going to honor him; but the prophet called to Jehu, and said, "I have a message for thee, O captain." So Jehu arose, and went into another room with the prophet alone. Then the young man took out the box of oil, and poured it upon Jehu's head, and said, "Thus saith the Lord, I anoint thee king of Israel. Thou shalt smite all the family of Ahab, and punish them. All the family of Ahab shall perish, and the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel in Jezreel."

Then the prophet opened the door, and fled. Jehu wondered, perhaps, to hear all this; but he went quickly back again to his friends, and sat down. They all wanted to know who the young man was who had called Jehu; and one asked, "Why did that mad fellow come to thee?" Jehu answered, "Do not you know?" They said, "No, we know nothing; tell us why he came." Then Jehu said, "He anointed me king over Israel in God's name." Did the captains wonder very much? Yes; but they were all willing to have Jehu for their king; for God made them willing. They all arose, and took their garments, and put them under Jehu, upon the top of the stairs; and they blew the trumpets, and shouted, "Jehu is king."

Jehu told the captains to keep the secret from the people in Jezreel; and then he rode in his chariot, and went to Jezreel, where Joram and Ahaziah were still staying. The watchman upon the tower in Jezreel saw Jehu coming, but he did not know at first who it was; so he went and told the king; and Joram sent a horseman to meet the chariot. When the horseman came up to Jehu, he said, "The king asks, Is it peace?" But Jehu answered, "What hast thou to do with peace?" Then another messenger came to ask, "Is it peace?" But Jehu answered as before. The watchman on the tower looked very attentively, and said to Joram, "The messengers who went to meet the chariot, do not return; and the man in the chariot drives like Jehu, for he is driving very furiously."

When Joram heard this, he commanded his servants to make his chariots ready, and he and Ahaziah rode to meet Jehu. When they came near, Joram cried, "Is it peace?" But Jehu answered, "What peace can there be while thy wicked mother Jezebel is living?" Joram began to be frightened, and cried out to his friend Ahaziah. But Ahaziah could not help Joram now. The time was come when both these wicked kings must be punished for their sins, and none could save them. Jehu drew his bow with all his strength, and shot an arrow into Joram's heart; and the king fell down dead in his chariot.

Ahaziah was now made king over Judah, and soon afterward died. When Athaliah, the wicked mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead, she destroyed all the king's sons, and made herself queen. Ahaziah's youngest son was then a babe; he could not take care of himself, but God took care of him; and this little child was saved when all his brothers were killed. His aunt, Jehoshabeath, hid him and his nurse from wicked

Athaliah, and brought him home, and kept him in safety in God's house for six years.

The babe's name was Joash. How sad it was for little Joash to live in a time of such trouble and danger! He had no father, no mother, no brother, to take care of him. But God was the friend of Joash, and he could make Jehoshabeath kinder to him than his own mother. The husband of this good aunt was named Jehoiada; he was a priest of the Lord. Jehoiada lived in the temple, and little Joash and Jehoshabeath lived there too.

When Joash was seven years old, Jehoiada thought the right time was come to make him king. Then he assembled all the people in the temple, and there they made a covenant together. The good priest spoke to them, and said, "Joash, the king's son, shall reign. God has promised that David's sons shall sit upon the throne of Judah; Joash has a right to the throne, and not Athaliah, who has had possession of the country so long. Let us trust in God, and he will help us to make Joash king. Divide yourselves now into three companies. Some must stand at the doors, and some at the king's house, and some at the gate. Let the priests and Levites come into the house of God, and let the people stand round to keep watch without."

So Jehoiada armed the captains and the people, and placed them all round the temple, to guard the young king. Then they brought Joash into the house of the Lord, and put the crown upon his head; and Jehoiada anointed him, and said, "God save the king;" and all the people shouted for joy, and cried again, "Joash is king." Athaliah heard the noise of the people running, and shouting, and rejoicing, and wondered why it was—she knew nothing about Joash; she thought he had perished with his brothers, many years before.

So Athaliah ran in haste to the house of God; and there she saw Joash standing, as king, by a pillar, and all the princes and people blowing the trumpets, and shouting, and rejoicing, and singing praises. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, "Treason, treason!" But Athaliah had no friends to help her now. Jehoiada called the captains; and they ran to Athaliah and took her out of the house of God, and put her to death. She deserved to die, for she had murdered many of her son's family, to make herself queen; and she was justly punished for her wickedness, and put to death herself.

Joash was now king, and could reign in peace. What care God

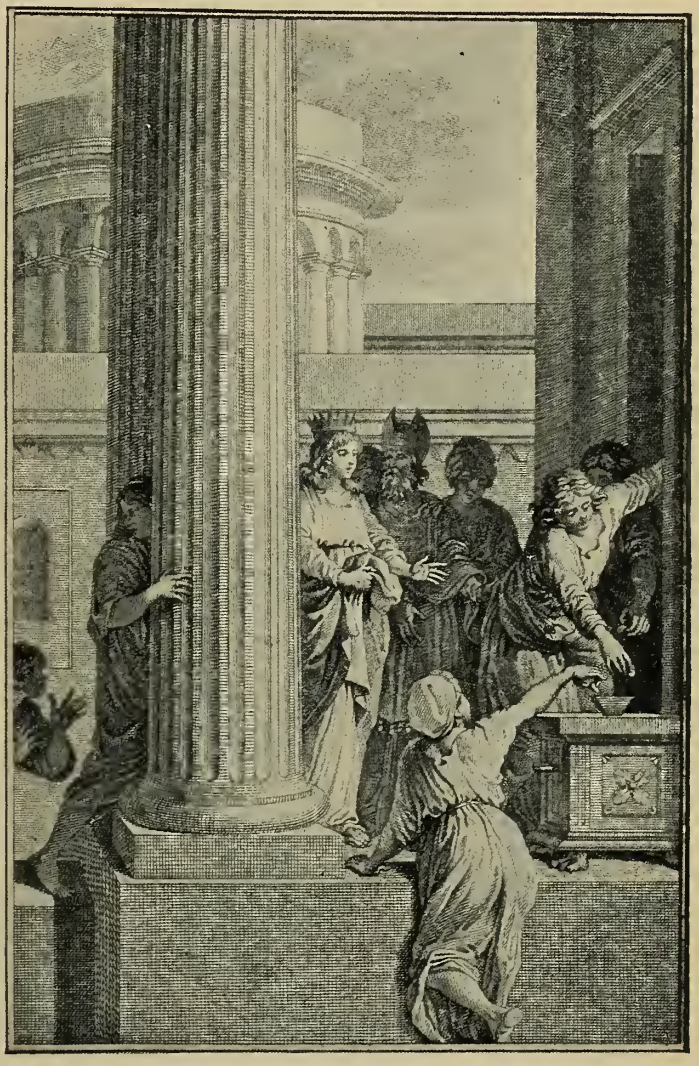
had taken of this little child, all the six years he had been hidden from his cruel grandmother! Why did God care so much for Joash? Because God remembered his promise to David. God loved David, and he loved David's children after him, and promised to give them the kingdom of Judah. And God loved Judah, and would not let his people suffer any longer under cruel Athaliah. He waited some years, but all those years he was watching over Joash, and over his people in Judah too; and when the right and best time came, he gave wisdom, and strength, and courage, to Jehoiada, that he might make Joash king, and slay wicked Athaliah. How wise and good God is! We may trust all to him. Ourselves, and our friends, and our country—all are in his keeping; and if we love him, and trust in him, as Jehoiada did, we may know that all will be well, and not fear any dangers, nor difficulties, nor troubles.

ATHALIAH PUT TO DEATH.

Joash was a little boy when he began to reign;—only seven years old. Kings have many duties to perform which are very difficult and very troublesome; and they need great wisdom to perform these duties rightly. The house of God had been sadly broken up by the wicked queen Athaliah; and now Joash wished very much to repair it. But Joash knew this would cost much money, more than he could

give: so he called the Levites and told them to go all through the country, and ask the people to give money to help to build up God's house.

But the Levites were not so anxious about this holy work as Joash was. They were very slow, and took a long time to collect the money. This was not right. When we have work to do, good work, work in God's service, we should do it directly, and as quickly as we can. "Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest."



JOASH COLLECTING MONEY FOR THE TEMPLE.

Joash was displeased to see his people so slow. He called Jehoiada and said, "Why are the Levites so long in collecting money for God's house? Tell the people to bring their money to the temple; and we will put a box by the door of the temple, and the money shall be thrown in there." So Jehoiada took a box, and made a hole in the top of it, and put it by the door of the house of the Lord; and all the people were told to bring their money, and to cast it into this box. The people were very glad to do this; they did not want to keep their riches for themselves, but were willing and joyful to give much of it to God. The box was soon full; and then the Levites opened it, and counted the money, and emptied the box, and put it in its place again. The money was given to the

carpenters, and masons, and workmen, who repaired the house of God, to pay them for their work. When all was finished, the Levites brought the rest of the money to the king and Jehoiada. Then Joash commanded that all this gold and silver should be made into holy vessels for the service of God; because the money all belonged to God. The temple was now repaired; and the people went to it every day, to offer their sacrifices, as God commanded.

REPAIRING THE TEMPLE.

Let us learn to be as generous in giving our money in God's service as the good people of Judah were. We have boxes now to hold money for holy purposes; to send out missionaries to heathen lands; and to buy Bibles and Testaments; and to build churches and schools where idolaters may learn about Jesus. The money in these boxes is all for the service of God; and if we love God, we shall be as glad to contribute as the people of Judah were. Rich people would throw in a great deal, if they truly loved God; and poor people would try to throw in a little. All would give something; and they would give it joyfully; for God does not like unwilling offerings. "God loveth a cheerful giver."

Was Elisha still alive? Yes; but he was now an old man, and very near death. Many years before, his dear master had been taken away

from him; and now Elisha was soon going to join him again, in that happy world where friends part no more forever. King Jehoash went to see Elisha when he was ill. Jehoash was not a good man; but he loved and honored Elisha, and this was right. The king knew how useful Elisha had been to his country; and he was very sorry to lose him, and wept over him, and cried, "Oh my father, my father!" Israel had suffered much from the Syrians; and Jehoash feared that now he should have no kind friend to help and comfort him. But Elisha wished to teach the king that God could still protect Israel, and fight their enemies for them.

The prophet taught Jehoash this by signs. He gave the king a bow and arrows, and put his hands upon the king's hands, and told Jehoash to open the window eastward. Jehoash opened it, and the prophet said, "Shoot." Jehoash shot the arrow out of the window, as Elisha told him; and then the prophet explained to Jehoash what the sign meant. He said, "This is the arrow of the Lord's deliverance from Syria. Thus shalt thou smite the Syrians and destroy them."

Then Elisha told the king to take the arrows again and smite upon the ground. Jehoash did so; but he smote only three times upon the ground, and then stayed, without waiting for Elisha's command. This made the prophet angry. He saw that Jehoash had no faith in God, no trust in him, no care to obey his commands; and he said to the king, "Thou oughtest to have smitten many times; then Syria should have been quite destroyed; but now thou shalt smite Syria only three times."

The Syrians had long troubled Israel. Hazael was king of Syria, and he was cruel to the Israelites, as Elisha had prophesied that he would be. But after Hazael was dead, Jehoash conquered the Syrians three times, and got possession again of the cities they had taken. Yet Jehoash smote the Syrians only three times. Why? Because he was so impatient, and had so little faith, when Elisha, at God's command, told him to smite upon the ground.

Good Elisha died, and was buried. All his troubles and sorrows were ended, and his happy soul went to join his dear master in heaven. Soon after Elisha's death, the Moabites came to invade the land. One day, as some Israelites were burying a dead man, they looked up, and saw the Moabites coming. The friends of the dead man took up the body in haste, and threw it into Elisha's tomb; for they were so much afraid that they could not stay to bury it. But a wonderful thing happened when

the dead man was put down into the tomb. As soon as the body touched the bones of Elisha it revived; and the man lived again, and stood upon his feet. There was no power in Elisha's bones to revive the man. It was God who did the miracle; and he showed the people by it how much he loved his faithful servant, and honored him after his death.

ELISHA'S BONES RESTORING A MAN TO LIFE.

When Jehu died, his son Jehoahaz reigned over Israel. Jehu loved the world; and God gave him, and his sons after him, worldly honors and worldly possessions. But Jehu and his children did not care for heavenly things; and, therefore, they had no possessions in that world which will last forever.

Joash was still king of Judah; but his kind friend, the good priest Jehoiada, was dead. He lived to be a very old man, 130 years old. He had served God many years, and done much good in Israel, and all the people loved and honored him. Jehoiada's son, Zechariah, was still living, and he was grieved to see the king and his people doing so wickedly; and God was angry; and he sent holy prophets, to tell them so; but the people would not attend.

At last Zechariah himself went to speak to the king and the people. He was a good man; God's Spirit was upon him, and he felt that he

ought to be bold, and to speak the truth to his king. So Zechariah went to Joash, and spoke very solemnly to him and to the people. Zechariah said, "Why do you disobey God's holy commands? You cannot prosper now. When you were obedient to God, you had his blessing, but now you have forsaken him, and he has forsaken you."

Was Joash willing to attend to Zechariah? Did he repent, and turn to God, and tell his people to throw away their foolish idols? No; Joash had become hardened in sin; he no longer cared for God, nor for Jehoiada, nor for Zechariah. He was angry with that bold and faithful man, and encouraged the people to conspire against him; and the good priest was slain in the temple of the Lord. Zechariah did not try to defend himself, when he saw his murderers coming to kill him. He submitted quietly to the cruel command of Joash; but as he lay wounded and dying, he said, "God sees, and he will punish;" and then he closed his eyes, and died. And God did see this wicked, ungrateful act; and he did punish Joash for it. The Syrians came, and destroyed many of the princes of Judah, and took away their riches.

THE MURDER OF ZECHARIAH.

# THE LAST KINGS OF THE HEBREWS.

UZZIAH was now king of Judah. God gave him strength to subdue the Philistines, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites; and everything that Uzziah did went on well. Why was this? Because the young king was seeking God in all he did. When Uzziah began anything new, he first asked God's help and blessing; and God heard his prayer, and directed him aright. Try, like Uzziah, to seek the Lord. Wherever you go, whatever you do, first ask God's blessing; and then all will go on well, and you will be happy and prosperous too. If you look to God for help, he will teach and guide you. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Uzziah did many things in his kingdom. He built towers, and digged wells. He had very much cattle; and a large army of soldiers to fight his enemies, and shields, and swords, and spears, and bows. He made engines for shooting arrows and great stones; and all the people who lived near wondered when they heard of his strength, and riches, and power. All this was very pleasant to Uzziah; but his prosperity did him no real good; it led him away from God. Like Solomon, he grew forgetful of God when he grew rich. He became proud of himself, and of his power, and his greatness; not remembering that all he had, God gave him.

Uzziah, in his pride, thought he might do as he pleased; and he went boldly into the temple of the Lord, to burn incense there. This was very wrong. The king was not the right person to burn incense: it was the business of the priests alone. When the priests saw Uzziah going into the holy place, they followed him, and said, "It is not right for thee, Uzziah, to burn incense. God has told the priests that they alone may burn incense; go out of this holy place; do not disobey the command of God."

Uzziah was angry with the priests, and would not attend to them: but God himself punished him for his sin. How did God punish Uzziah? He smote him with leprosy while he was in the temple. The priests looked at the king while he was standing by the altar, and saw this dreadful leprosy rising in his forehead; and then they quickly took him out of the temple; for no leper might stay in that holy place. Uzziah himself was in haste to go out, when he felt how God had smitten and dishonored him for his sin.

He lived in a house alone, and was not allowed to come into the holy temple. Uzziah had been very proud; now God humbled him, and made him feel how weak and helpless he was. He could not judge his people himself, nor attend to his kingdom; his son Jotham did all for him; and when Uzziah died, Jotham was made king. Learn what a sin pride is. Solomon says, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

UZZIAH SMITTEN WITH LEPROSY.

Jotham, king of Judah, was a very good king. He did right; but his people went on in their own wicked ways, and did not wish to be like him. This must have troubled Jotham very much; but he trusted in God, and sought comfort in him, and God strengthened and blessed him. Jotham built a great many cities in the mountains of Judah, and towers and castles in the forests. Then he fought with the Ammonites and conquered them; and Jotham was prospered in all that he did, because "he prepared his way before the Lord his God."

We may learn something from the history of this good king. We have not kingdoms to rule, nor cities to build, nor battles to fight, as he had; but we all have some work, some business to do; and when we begin this work, we ought, like Jotham, to ask God's blessing. We should pray

God to keep us from beginning anything wrong, and to help us in doing what is right. Then, all we do shall prosper; we shall be active and busy, but we shall remember that we are the servants of God, and try to please him in all things. "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."

After Jotham's death, Ahaz, his son, was made king of Judah. Ahaz was not like his father; he was a very wicked man. Ahaz worshipped images, and the gods of the heathen nations, and sacrificed to them, and burned his children in the fire before these idols. God, for this dreadful wickedness, soon punished him. The king of Syria came and fought against Ahaz, and took many of the people prisoners, and carried them away to Damascus. And some were slain by Pekah, king of Israel, and others were taken captive to Samaria.

But there was then in Samaria a good prophet, named Oded, and when he saw all these poor people from Judah brought into the city, he felt sad. Why? Because Judah was a part of God's people as well as Israel. Israel and Judah were brethren; they ought to have been kind one to the other—friends, not enemies. And though God was angry with Judah, Oded knew that he loved his people still, and would be angry with Israel for taking them prisoners.

So Oded went boldly to the army of Israel, and said, "God has given the children of Judah into your power, because they have sinned against him. You have slain some of them and taken many more, and brought them as prisoners here. And now you are going to make slaves of them; you show them no love, no pity. Why are you so cruel to these poor people? They are your brethren; and though they have sinned, remember that you have sinned too. Now, attend to me, and send home these prisoners, whom you have taken captive, and do not make God angry with you."

Some of the nobles of Israel attended to the good prophet, and said to the soldiers, "You shall not bring the prisoners here. We have sinned very much already; do not let us sin still more." So the soldiers left the prisoners, and all the riches they had taken, before the princes and the people. Many of these prisoners were without clothes; and some were very weak and sickly; and all were hungry and wanted food. But the kind princes gave these poor people clothes, and shoes, and food, and water.

Then the princes took those who were weak and sickly, and put

them upon asses, and gave them all they wanted for their journey, and sent them away. Where were they going? Home to Judah, to their own country. The princes carried all the prisoners as far as Jericho, and then returned to Samaria.

Hezekiah was now king of Judah. He was the son of Ahaz, but he was not like his father; Hezekiah was a holy man. When he began to reign, the kingdom of Judah was in a sad state. The holy temple of God was shut up; idol altars were in all the high places; incense was burnt to new gods, and sacrifices offered to them, and not to the Lord, the true God. Ahaz had done this; but Hezekiah began to undo it all directly, for he knew it was his duty, as king, to teach and command the people to serve God.

ODED INTERCEDING FOR THE CAPTIVES.

So first, Hezekiah called together the priests and the Levites, because it was their business to take care of God's temple and service, and of the holy things. He spoke very solemnly to the priests and Levites, and yet very affectionately, like a kind father. Rulers and governors ought always to be kind and affectionate to those they are set over. They must be strict, but they may be gentle and loving too. It is best to do all things in love.

Hezekiah said, "Hear what I am going to tell you. Our fathers

forsook God, and worshipped idols, and shut up the holy temples, and burnt no incense, and offered no sacrifices to God. All this has made him angry, and he has sent trouble and sorrow upon Judah, to punish his people for their sin. Now let us return to God, and serve him with all our hearts. You are the priests of the Lord. He has chosen you to offer sacrifices to him, and to burn incense. Now, then, arise and serve him. Put away these idols, and let us make a covenant with our God, and then we shall have his blessing, and his anger will be turned away."

IDOLS DESTROYED BY HEZEKIAH.

The priests and Levites attended to what their good king said, and willingly obeyed him. They went directly to the house of God, and cleansed it, and took away all the idolatrous things, and destroyed them. Among these things was the brazen serpent which Moses had made in the wilderness. The people honored this serpent, and burned incense to it. There are people now in many countries as foolish as the people of Judah. The ignorant heathen give to dumb idols honor and worship which belong only to God.

Thus they disobey the commandment which says, "Thou shalt not make any graven images; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them." Hezekiah commanded the brazen serpent to be taken away; and

he broke it in pieces, to show the people it was only a piece of brass without power to help them.

Then the Levites brought back the holy vessels which Ahaz had taken away, and put them in the temple again. All was now ready; the temple was cleansed, the altars, and the tables, and the shew-bread, and the holy things, were in their right places. Then Hezekiah rose very early in the morning, and called the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the Lord. Why? Because they were going to offer sacrifices there; to confess their sins, and to pray for forgiveness. They brought bullocks, and rams, and lambs, and goats, for a sin-offering for the kingdom; and Hezekiah commanded the priests to offer all these animals on the altar of the Lord. Then the priests killed the bullocks and the lambs, and the rams, and sprinkled the blood upon the altar. Afterwards, they brought the goats, and laid their hands upon them, confessing the people's sin, and killed them, to make atonement for all Israel.

We have been reading about Hezekiah's happiness, now we must read about his troubles. All people in this world must have trouble sometimes; God's people, and wicked people too. But when God sends trouble to his people, he sends it in love. He sends it to teach them to trust in him more, and to love him more; and he can comfort them in all their sorrows, and deliver them if he please.

But what was Hezekiah's trouble? There was a king of Assyria, named Sennacherib. He was a very wicked man, and a very ambitious king, and he did not like Hezekiah to enjoy his kingdom in peace. Sennacherib wished to take possession of Judah, and to reign over it himself. So he made ready a large army, and sent it against Jerusalem, with Rabshakeh his captain. When Hezekiah saw the army coming, he sent some of his great men out to speak to Rabshakeh, and ask him why he was come.

Then Rabshakeh told them his master's message, and a very wicked message it was. "Thus saith the great king of Assyria: I am come to this land to destroy it. Who can deliver you from my hand? Can the king of Egypt? Do you trust in him? He has no power to help you. Does your king Hezekiah tell you to trust in God? Does he say, the Lord will deliver you? Do not attend to Hezekiah. God cannot deliver you. I have fought against many nations, and conquered them. Their gods could not save them; and how can your God save you? Attend to me; serve me, and do not hearken to Hezekiah."

The men of Judah heard Sennacherib's message, but they made no answer; for Hezekiah had told them not to give an answer to Rabshakeh, but to come back directly. When Hezekiah heard the message, he was very much troubled. He rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, as signs of his great sorrow.

But Hezekiah knew where to find help. Where did he go? Did he ask the king of Egypt to help him? No; Hezekiah could not trust in him. Did he go to his soldiers, and make them ready for battle? No; Hezekiah knew that they alone could have no power against the great Assyrian army. Where did he go? He went into the house of the Lord, and told all his troubles to God. Hezekiah knew that God was stronger than Sennacherib, and that he was his friend, and could hear his prayer, and deliver him from his enemies.

When Hezekiah had prayed to God, he sent to the good prophet Isaiah, to ask for advice from him. Hezekiah's messengers came to Isaiah covered with sackcloth, and full of sorrow. They said, "Thus saith Hezekiah, This is a day of trouble and sorrow. The king of Assyria has sent Rabshakeh to speak blasphemy against God. But it may be, the Lord will hear the wicked words of Rabshakeh, and deliver his people; and we ask thy prayer for those who are left." God had told Isaiah what to say to Hezekiah; he had a message of comfort for these poor, sorrowful people.

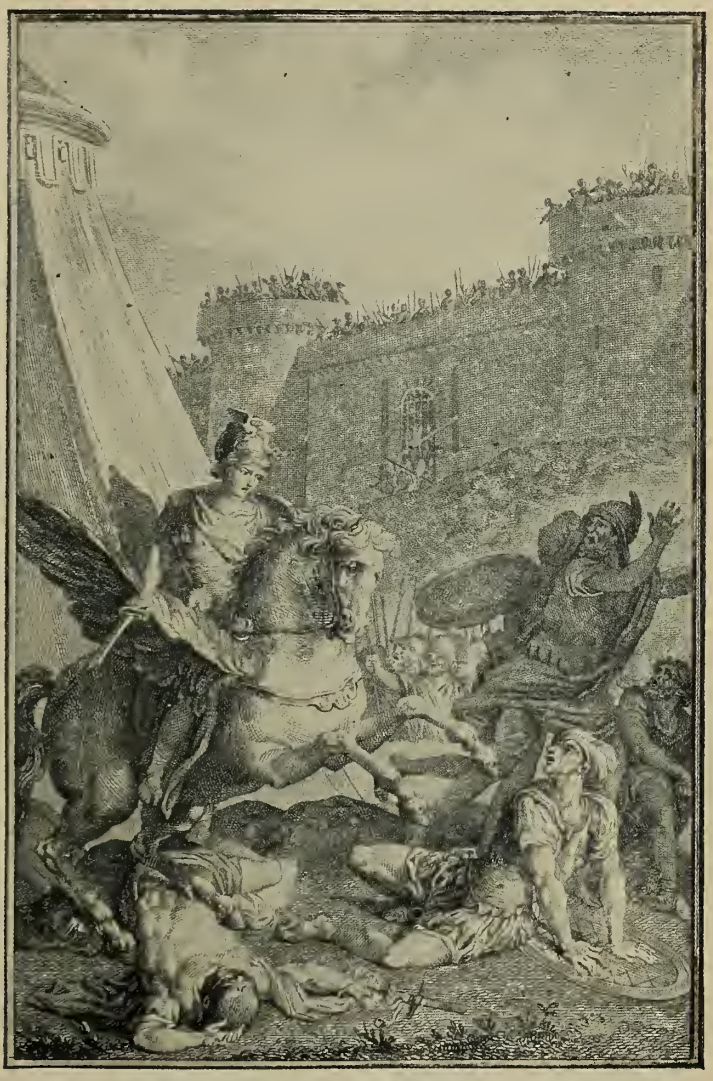
Isaiah said, "Tell your master not to fear the words of Rabshakeh. God himself will deliver you from this great army. The king of Assyria shall not hurt Jerusalem; he shall not shoot an arrow there, nor come against it with shields. God will defend the city, and smite the Assyrian army, and make their king return to their own land; and there he shall fall by the sword."

Then the messengers returned, and told Hezekiah what Isaiah had said; and Hezekiah believed in God, and trusted all to him, and was comforted. And was the army of Assyria destroyed? Yes; but not by Hezekiah, nor by his soldiers, nor his people. They all waited quietly that night for God to deliver them.

And, in the night, God sent out his destroying angel to the army of the Assyrians. These wicked men were all asleep in their camp, little thinking of the punishment that was coming. They did not care for God; they laughed at his power, and at his people, and thought they were safe, and feared nothing. But while they were lying asleep in their camp, the

destroying angel came down from heaven, and went from tent to tent, and smote all the soldiers of that large army; one hundred and eighty-five thousand were slain, without time to repent and ask for pardon!

The people of Judah arose in the morning, and looked towards their enemies' camp. What did they see? No cruel enemies were there now; no wicked Rabshakeh speaking blasphemy against God. All was quiet. The bodies of the Assyrians were lying dead upon the ground; their souls were gone to appear before the great God whom they had despised and blasphemed. Sennacherib himself returned to his own country, but he did not live there long. Soon after, when he was worshipping in the temple of his idol god, his sons rushed in, and smote him, and killed him.



AN ANGEL DESTROYS SENNACHERIB'S HOST.

What a sad end of Sennacherib and all his army! How dreadful it is to despise God, and rebel against him! He will, sooner or later, punish all his enemies. They cannot always resist his power and rush on headlong in their evil ways.

Soon after God had delivered Hezekiah from the Assyrian army, the good king became very, very ill; so ill that he thought he must soon die. The kind prophet Isaiah came to him, and said, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." This was a solemn message.

Hezekiah felt this: and when Isaiah told him to prepare for death, he "turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord."

Hezekiah was ready to die. He had long loved and served God; his sins had been washed away, and his heart had been made new. Was he afraid to die? No; but when he thought that death was so near, he felt that he wanted strength and comfort, and he knew who alone could give them. When he had been in trouble and difficulty before, he had sought God in his house. But Hezekiah could not go there now; he thought he should never go to God's temple again.

But God was with Hezekiah still, and could hear his prayers on a sick bed, and comfort him there as he had done in the temple. Hezekiah wept very much when he prayed. Was he sorry to die? He could not be sorry to leave a wicked world, and go to his home in heaven; but, perhaps, he was sorry when he remembered his kingdom, and the people whom he loved so much, to think that, after his death, they might have a king who would not teach them rightly, and that they might fall into sin and idolatry again.

Hezekiah had been very useful. He had done much good in Judah, and he wanted to do more. God's people should be willing to go, and their friends willing to part with them, whenever this is God's will. Hezekiah wept, but he did not murmur. He was ready to submit to God, and left all to him.

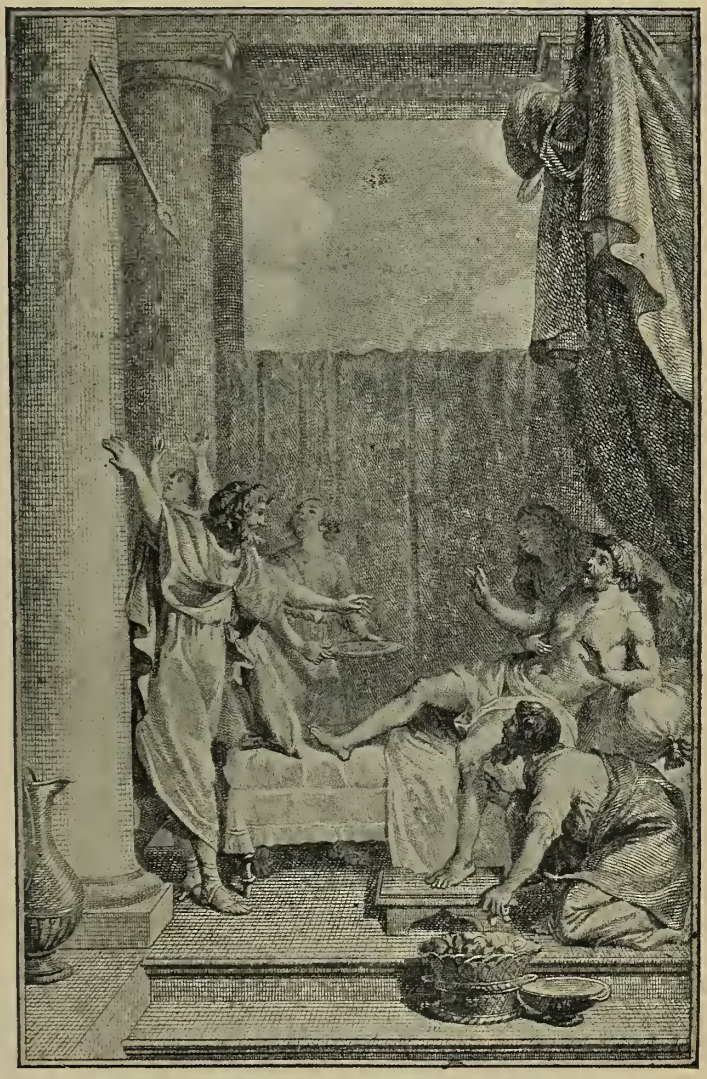
And did Hezekiah die? No; it pleased God to spare his life. God had more work for him to do, and he told him by the prophet Isaiah, that he would add to his life fifteen years. This message surprised the king very much; he did not disbelieve God's promise, but he wanted to be still more assured of it; so he asked Isaiah, "What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the Lord again?"

Isaiah answered, "God will give the sign upon yonder sun-dial. Shall the shadow there go forward ten degrees, or shall it go back ten degrees?" Hezekiah said, "Let the shadow go back ten degrees." Then Isaiah cried to the Lord, and asked him to give this sign to king Hezekiah. And God did as he asked. The king looked at the sun-dial, and he saw the shadow on it moving; but the shadow did not move forward as usual. It went back ten degrees, and then it stopped upon a degree it had passed long before.

Why was this? How can we understand it? We cannot. It was

a miracle which God alone could do; and he was pleased to do it now, to strengthen the faith of Hezekiah, and to convince him that the God who could bring back the shadow on the dial, could bring Hezekiah back also to life and health again.

Hezekiah was now well, and the first thing he did after his recovery was to go to the house of the Lord. There he thanked his merciful God who had so wonderfully healed him, and gave himself up again to his service. When we are raised from illness this is what we should do. First, thank God who has healed us, and then ask him to help us to love and serve him better than we did before.



ISAIAH'S PREDICTION TO HEZEKIAH.

Hezekiah wrote a beautiful song of praise after his recovery, thanking God for his great mercy. All the people of Judah rejoiced when they saw their king restored to them again; it was a time of great joy in Jerusalem, and other people rejoiced too in his recovery. The king of Babylon wrote letters to Hezekiah, and sent him a present. Hezekiah was pleased to see the messengers of the king of Babylon. He was very kind to them, and gave them all they wished, and showed them his possessions; his gold, and silver, and armor, and houses, and everything he had. Was this right? It was right to be kind and hospitable. The Bible tells us to be

so. But Hezekiah felt very proud when he showed his riches to the messengers of the king of Babylon, and that was wrong. He wanted them to praise him, and to go home and tell their master what a great king Hezekiah was.

That was pride; it was love of the world, and of worldly things, and worldly praise. We are commanded not to seek the praise of men, but the praise of God; not to seek to please men, but to please God. Hezekiah did not please God now.

The messengers went away; and, perhaps, Hezekiah soon forgot his sin; but God had not forgotten it. He had seen all. He had looked into the heart of Hezekiah when he was showing his riches to the messengers, and had seen there all Hezekiah's pride and foolish vanity; and now he was going to punish his sinful servant. One day Isaiah came to see Hezekiah; but he did not look upon Hezekiah as he used to look. Then Isaiah asked, "Who were those men who came to Jerusalem? From whence came they?" Hezekiah answered, "They came from a very distant country, from Babylon."

Isaiah asked again, "What have they seen in thy house?" Perhaps Hezekiah began now to feel his sin, and to be ashamed of it, but he did not try to deny or excuse it. He confessed directly, "I have shown them everything in my house." Then Isaiah said, "Hear the words of the Lord: Very soon all the riches which thou hast laid up, shall be taken away to Babylon, and thy sons shall be carried captive, and they shall be servants to the king of Babylon."

This was the punishment of Hezekiah. He had loved his riches too much; God would soon take them all away. He had proudly shown his possessions to the messengers of the king of Babylon; the king of Babylon would one day come, and carry those possessions to his own country, and take Hezekiah's children there as helpless prisoners. How foolish it is to trust in earthly things, and love them so much! They cannot always stay with us; and perhaps we may lose them very soon. It is best and wiser to have our riches and possessions in heaven. We can never lose our heavenly treasures; they will last for ever.

Hezekiah felt his sin, and submitted humbly to the punishment. He asked for pardon, and for grace to help him to be humble, and to love the world less, and God more. And God in mercy heard his prayer, and told him that evil should not yet come upon the land of Judah. This

comforted Hezekiah, and he thanked God and said, "There shall be peace and truth in my days."

This story ought to teach us how weak and sinful we all are. Hezekiah was a good man; but when he was left to himself, when he trusted to his own strength and goodness, he forgot to ask for God's grace, he began to sin directly. Our hearts are full of pride, and of every other sin, which God alone can help us to subdue. Jesus Christ says, "Without me ye can do nothing."

The fifteen years passed away. They were happy and prosperous years; but they soon ended, and then the time came when Hezekiah must die. And he was willing to die now; he did not wish more years added to his life. He had had enough of the world, and was glad to leave its sins, and follies, and vanities, and to go to his home in heaven.

We do not know when we shall die. God has not told us, as he told Hezekiah, how many years longer we shall live. Perhaps we may live fifteen years, or more; perhaps we may die this year. We cannot tell. But are we ready to die? Have our sins been repented of, and forgiven? Have our hearts been made new by God's Holy Spirit? Do we love God better than all the world, and are we trying to serve him in all we do? If not, we cannot be ready to die, and this is a very awful thought. Death may come in a moment; and where will the soul go then, if it is not prepared for heaven? Seek, like Hezekiah, to be ready for death.

Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, now reigned over Judah. He was not like his good father; he was an idolater, and built again all the idol-altars which Hezekiah had thrown down. He worshipped the sun, and moon, and stars; he burnt his children in sacrifice to idols, and set up an image in God's holy temple. The people of Judah soon learnt to do as Manasseh did, and all the country became again full of idolatry, and rebellion against God.

God warned Manasseh and his people; he spoke to them by his prophets; but this wicked nation would not attend to the warning. Then punishment came; all those troubles of which Isaiah had spoken to Hezekiah. The king of Assyria sent, and took Manasseh prisoner, and bound him in chains, and brought him to Babylon.

Manasseh now felt how dreadful it is to sin against God. He thought of all his past sins; his wicked idolatry, and forgetfulness of the true God. And then, perhaps, he remembered his good father, and all the

holy lessons Hezekiah had taught him many years before. Manasseh had not then cared for the things which Hezekiah loved so much. He had been, perhaps, a rebellious, disobedient child, and had given his kind father much trouble and sorrow. But Hezekiah had often prayed that God would have mercy on his son; and now, after so many years, when Hezekiah was in his grave, God answered his prayers.

CAPTIVITY AND REPENTANCE OF MANASSEH.

Manasseh repented in his captivity. His sorrows brought him to God. "When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him." And did God hear Manasseh's prayer? Yes, God is so merciful, that he will hear and pardon all who truly repent. He casts out none who come to him, if they believe in him. God heard and blessed Manasseh. He delivered him from his trouble, and brought him home to his own kingdom again; and Manasseh reigned in peace in Jerusalem. He did not reign now as he had reigned before. Manasseh had learnt "that the Lord he was God;" so he took away the idols, and threw down the altars, and commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel. The last part of Manasseh's life was happy. Why? Because Manasseh was at peace with God, and he had his blessing.

Amon, Manasseh's son, reigned now in Judah. He worshipped idols, as his father had done at first; but Amon did not, like his father, repent of his sins, and humble himself before God. He grew worse and worse; and at last his servants conspired against him, and slew him, and made his son Josiah king of Judah.

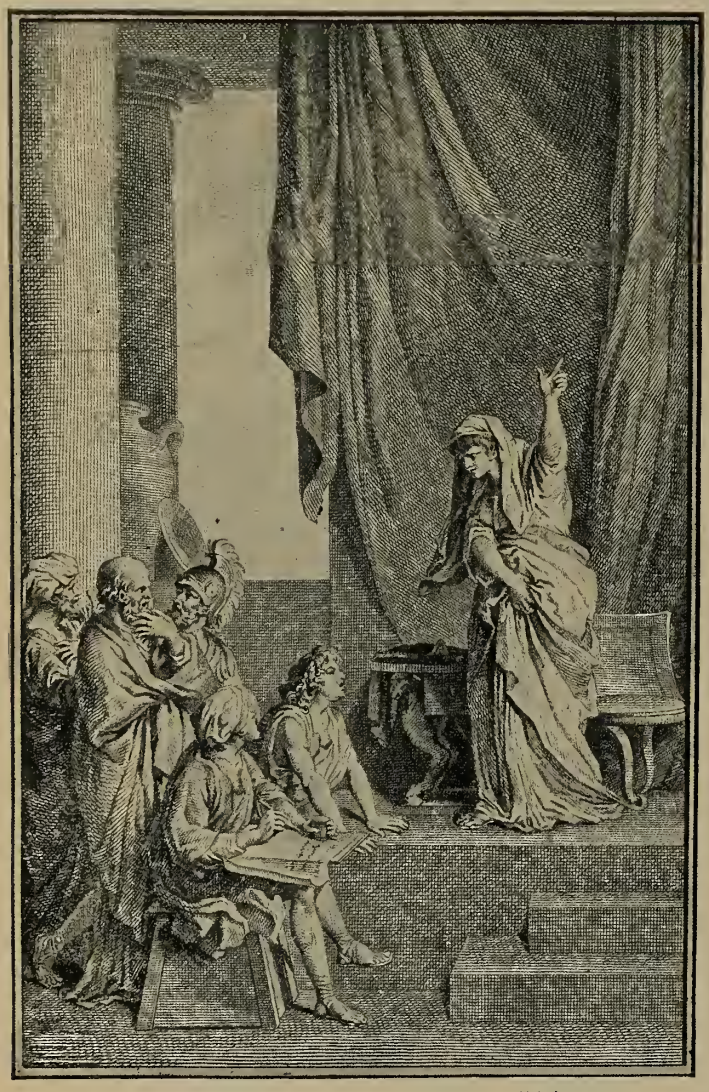
Josiah was a little boy when he began to reign; only eight years old. We have read before of many little boys who began when they were very young to love and fear the Lord; and Josiah was like these good children. The Bible tells us "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." But how could Josiah know what was right? The Bible tells us this too. It was because Josiah was taught of God. "While he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father," and God who had taken care of David, and loved and blessed him all his life, heard the prayer of young Josiah, and loved and blessed him also. God gave him his Holy Spirit to teach him to do right, and to rule his kingdom well.

Josiah was ignorant, and weak, and sinful, like other children; it was the Spirit of God, not his own wisdom, and strength, and goodness, that made him do right in the sight of the Lord. How happy Josiah was, to have a heavenly Father to keep and guide him, when his earthly father was dead! He was a happy child, because he was a holy child. And may not children now be as holy and as happy as Josiah was? Yes, if they seek to be so, as he sought. God is as willing to attend to children now as he was when Josiah lived. He will hear the prayers of every child who humbly seeks him. Jesus still says, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me."

When Josiah grew older, he was anxious to do all he could for the service of God; and he commanded that the holy temple should be repaired. Money was collected from the people who came to God's house; and this money was given to carpenters, and masons, and builders, and they bought wood and stone, and began to repair the temple. The money given to these men was not counted. The king and the priests knew that the workmen were faithful and honest, and that they would not steal nor waste the money; for they were the servants of God, and remembered always that his eye was upon them.

When Hilkiah, the priest, went into the house of the Lord to bring out the money, he found there the book of the law of God; and he

carefully brought it out, and sent it to the king. Josiah honored this book very much, because it was the book of God; his holy law was written in it. Josiah told one of his servants to read the book to him; and he listened to it very attentively, and very reverently. This is what we ought to do when we have the Bible read to us; and when we read it to ourselves, we should remember that it is God's word, and attend to it very solemnly, and seek to understand it.



JOSIAH CONSULTS THE PROPHETESS.

But when Josiah had heard the book read, he began to weep; and he rent his clothes, and was in very great trouble. Why was this? What did God's law say to him to make him so unhappy? It told him of God's holiness and hatred of sin, and of his anger against those who disobey his commands. Josiah felt that he and his people had many times disobeyed God; and he was afraid that soon God might punish them, because they had done so much to make him angry. This thought made Josiah tremble and rend his clothes. And when sinners read the Bible now, there is much to make them tremble too. We read there that "all have sinned," and "the soul that sinneth it shall die."

There was a good woman living at Jerusalem, named Huldah. She was a prophetess; and God honored her very much in making known his will to her, by his Spirit. When Josiah was in so much trouble after

reading God's law, he sent messengers to Huldah to ask her advice. God had seen all Josiah's trouble; he knew all his thoughts, and he had sent a message of comfort for him to the prophetess Huldah. She told the messengers, that God was indeed angry with the people of Judah, and that he would surely punish them as his law threatened; but that he was not angry with Josiah.

He said to him, "Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me, I have heard thee, saith the Lord. Thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see the evil that I will bring upon this place." This comforted Josiah. What a blessing it is to have God for our friend! Then we need never fear; for he will always be with us, to keep, and bless, and comfort us. If he please, he can preserve us from all evil; or he can take us away from it, as he took away Josiah, in peace. "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace."

Josiah read the law of God to the people. He made a holy covenant with God, to love and serve him with all his heart; and then he made his people promise that they too would serve the Lord. The people were willing and obedient; and they put away their idols, and said, "We will serve the Lord." Then Josiah threw down the idol-altars, and broke in pieces the images, and destroyed the altar which Jeroboam had set up in Bethel.

Long ago, we read the story of the prophet who came to Bethel, in Jeroboam's time, and prophesied that the idol-altars should be thrown down and men's bones burnt upon them. Now, this prophecy was fulfilled: Josiah was the king who destroyed the altars, as God had said. Josiah saw the tombs of many of the wicked priests; and he opened these tombs and took out the bones, and burnt them upon the altar. Then he slew the living idolatrous priests, and burnt their bones too.

But there was one tomb in Bethel which Josiah did not open. There was a title upon that tomb, and Josiah asked what the title was. The people said, "That is the grave of the prophet who came from Judah, many years ago, and prophesied about those things which thou hast done to the altar of Bethel." Then Josiah said, "Let no man move his bones." So his bones were left quietly in their resting-place, with the bones of the old prophet who was buried by him.

After the idols were destroyed, Josiah kept the feast of the Passover, with all his people, in Jerusalem. This good king tried to teach his subjects the right way; and God blessed him in what he did, and his country was peaceful and happy many years. But after all this the king of Egypt fought against Assyria, and Josiah went out to resist him. It was wrong of Josiah to join in this war without God's direction; and he was punished for his folly:—he was killed in the battle.

DEATH OF KING JOSIAH.

His body was brought to Jerusalem; and all the people wept over it, because they loved and honored their king. He was safe now from all the evils that were coming on his country. His body was quietly resting in the grave, and his soul was in that happy place where no evil can come, and where so many of his fathers had gone before.

There have been many good kings, of whom we read in history, and many bad ones. The higher our position is and the more influence we exert, the more careful we should be to do what is right. No rulers are more honored than those who are wise and good, even though they may not be so great as some Cæsar or Napoleon. "To be only great as I am good," is an excellent motto for all young people, and if they follow it they cannot make any mistake.

# THE CAPTIVITY.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR, king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem, and took Jehoiakim prisoner, and bound him with chains, and was going to carry him to Babylon. But Jehoiakim died before he could be taken there; and his dead body was cast out unburied, beyond the gates of Jerusalem. None pitied, none cared for this wicked and rebellious king.

Nebuchadnezzar went into the house of God, and took away all the holy vessels he found there, and caried them to Babylon, and put them into his idol's temple. Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, reigned in Judah after his father, but only a very little time. Nebuchadnezzar came again to Jerusalem, and made Zedekiah, a relation of Jehoiachin, king; and carried Jehoiachin to Babylon, where he lived some years. A great many of the people of Judah were carried to Babylon also; all the princes, and nobles, and work-people; only the poorest of the people were left in Jerusalem, with Zedekiah to reign over them. Jeremiah was there too; he was left to prophesy, and to warn the people of Judah.

Among the captives taken to Babylon, were some young nobles and princes. The king of Babylon was pleased with these children; and he said they should be taught all the learning of the Babylonians; and after a few years be taken into his palace to stand before him. The Bible tells us a great deal about four of these young princes. Their names were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. One of Nebuchadnezzar's servants had the care of them, whose name was Melzar. Every day he brought them meat and wine from the king's table; for Nebuchadnezzar sent the young princes every thing he thought they might like; and they had masters to teach them, and all that this world could give to make them happy.

But Daniel and his young friends had learnt in their own country better wisdom than they were taught at Babylon; they had learnt to seek happiness, not in this world, but in God; and all their delight was in holy and heavenly things. When they came to Babylon, they knew that they should be often tempted to forget God, the God of Israel, and to love the things of the world, the foolish and wicked pleasures of Babylon. But these children were determined that they would not forsake their kind and merciful God in this strange and wicked land.

The food which was brought to the young princes was sometimes food forbidden by the Jewish law; and sometimes it had been offered to the idols of Babylon. Daniel and his friends knew that it was wrong to eat this food. They were not now in their own country; but they wished still to obey the laws which God himself had given to them; and they determined not to displease him by eating what he had forbidden. They therefore refused the food offered them.

DANIEL'S ACCUSERS THROWN TO THE LIONS.

Afterward Daniel incurred the displeasure of the king of Babylon, who at this time was Darius, and was cast into a den of lions. When the king came to the den, he cried out, "O, Daniel, is thy God, whom thou servest, able to deliver thee from the lions?" Darius waited very anxiously for the answer: but how glad he was when he heard Daniel's voice again, and found that he was still alive and well in the lions' den! And what did Daniel say? He said, "O king, my God has sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me." Then Darius was glad, and he commanded that Daniel should be taken out of the den. "So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God."

And now the king determined to punish Daniel's wicked accusers; so he commanded them to be brought and cast into the den. They had

no God to preserve them; no holy angel was sent to shut the lions' mouths for them; no, the savage beasts sprang upon them in a moment, and broke all their bones to pieces before they came to the bottom of the den. All the people saw and wondered; and confessed that Daniel's God was indeed a powerful God, able to deliver his servants and to punish his enemies. And then Darius wrote to all the people in his kingdom, and told them the wonderful story of Daniel's deliverance, and commanded them to fear and tremble before the great and powerful God of Daniel.

Let this powerful God be your friend, as he was Daniel's; and then you need not fear any enemy, nor any trouble. He is the "Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort who comforteth us in all our tribulation."

The history of the Jewish captivity is contained in the book of Ezra. After seventy years light broke in upon their darkness, the years of their exile from their dear Jerusalem were ended, and they saw the dawn of a brighter day.

Ezra was a priest very skilful in the law, the son of Seraiah, the high priest, who was slain by Nebuchadnezzar. He was also a ready scribe in the law of Moses, and a careful student and collector of the sacred books. He has been called a second Moses, having been instrumental, like him, in leading Israel out of captivity; in preserving the holy law, as Moses gave it; and having lived, as it is said, the same number of years, that is, one hundred and twenty.

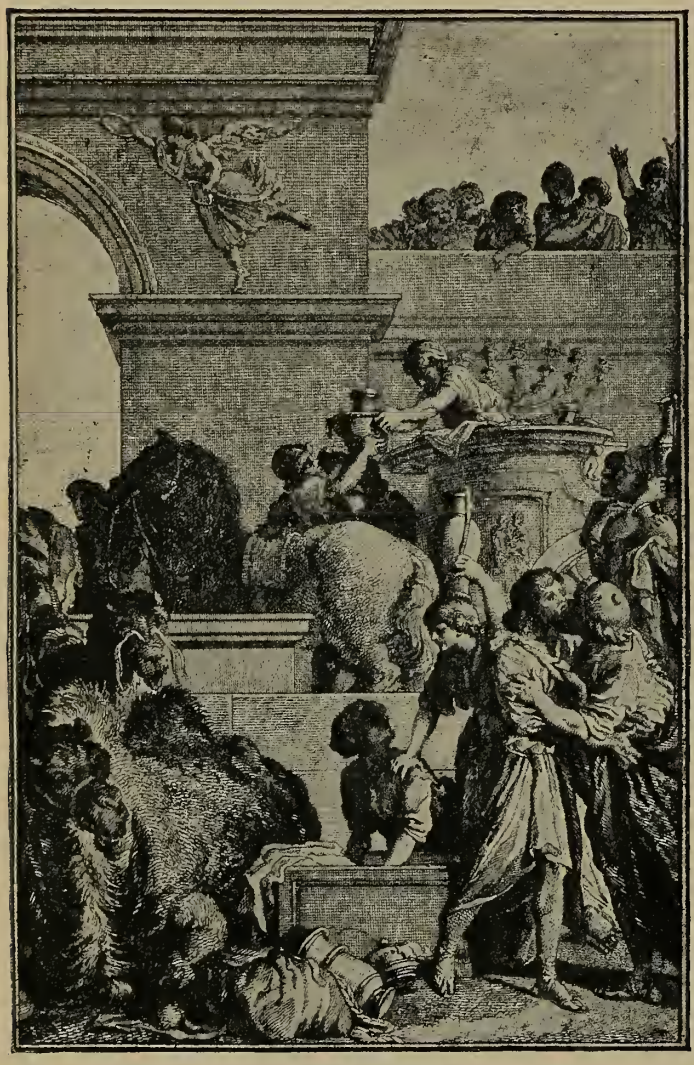
Cyrus, the king of Persia, who conquered Babylon, as Babylon had conquered the Jews, found the Jews captive there, and was moved by God to set them all at liberty, and gave them every encouragement to return to their own country. In his proclamation, Cyrus says to the Jews, "The Lord God of heaven hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people?—his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (he is the God), which is in Jerusalem."

Most eagerly did "the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, accept of this release, for God had raised up their spirits to go up to build the house of the Lord."

Cyrus also commanded that those who were rich should help those who were poor, and give them silver, gold, goods, and cattle, to enable them to return and live in their own country. So "all that were about

them," the Chaldeans as well as the rich Jews, helped forward the return to the desolate land.

Besides the money, goods, and cattle, thus given to these people, God also inclined the heart of Cyrus to give up all the rich plunder of the temple, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away. This consisted of golden and silver chargers or dishes, knives, basins, and other vessels of gold and silver, amounting in all to five thousand four hundred.

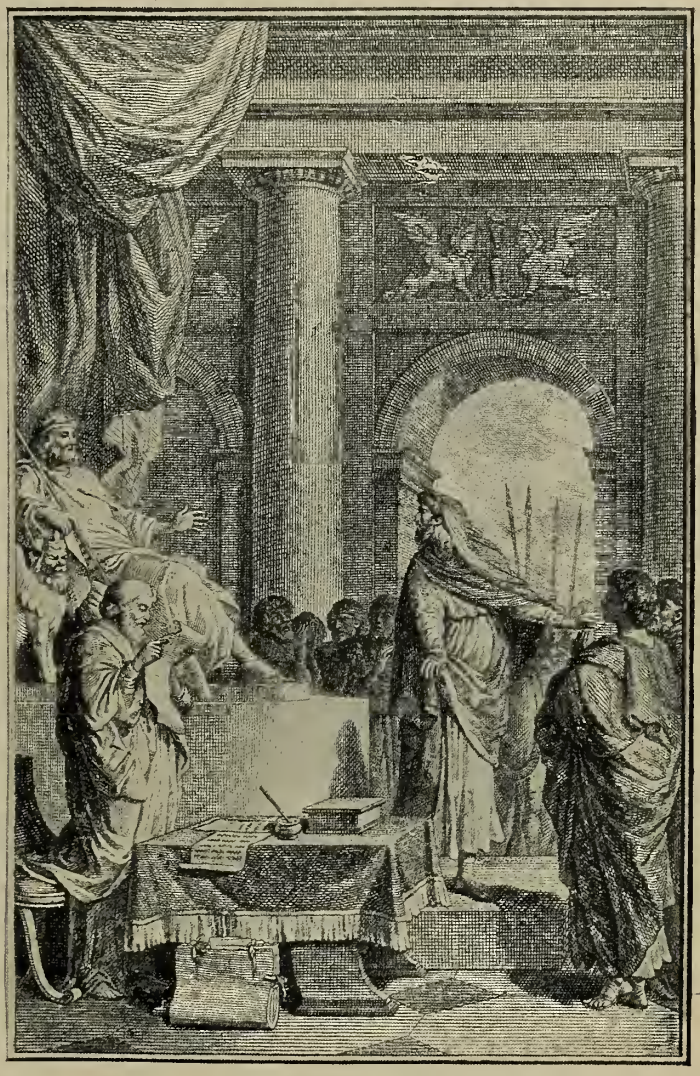


THE JEWS PREPARING TO RETURN.

The whole number that returned to their own country is stated at forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, besides seven thousand servants, and two hundred singing men. But then these were not the whole of the Jews. Many of the lower orders were left in the country to till the ground; but all that were ingenious, as artificers, or rich, or had any influence in the country, were taken away. Moreover, many now fixed in Babylon, and who had no love for their own country, and no religion to make them desirous of serving God in his temple, remained behind.

It is said that "Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord." He learned the holy truth of God that he might "teach in Israel statutes and judgments;" that is, "the laws moral, ceremonial, and civil."

By moral laws are meant those which relate to our duty to God and our neighbor—not to swear, break the Sabbath, lie, steal, and do other wicked things, but to love God and to love our neighbors, and to try and do them good. By ceremonial laws, are intended those which regulated all the customs of Jewish worship. And by civil laws are pointed out those which regulate our conduct in society towards each other, especially as citizens, watching over each other's interests as a body of people, and behaving orderly in our connection with mankind around us.



EZRA OBTAINING HIS COMMISSION.

Such a man as Ezra, who learned, and did, and taught these laws, was indeed a blessing to his nation. To show how God approved of him, he gave him the greatest success at the court of Babylon; for the king wrote a letter granting him a number of favors for his people, and giving him very great power. He wrote a letter which, you will observe, begins, "Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest." This title supremely, or above all, belongs to Jesus Christ, who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

It was, however, neither a profane, nor a false title, as used by Artaxerxes, for he was king over other kings, who, having been conquered by his people, were tributary to him, and held their crowns at his pleasure.

In this letter, the king granted permission to all the Jews which yet remained at Babylon, to go to Jerusalem. He also authorized him to inquire into all the behavior of the Jews at Jerusalem, and to see if it was such as the law of his God required.

He likewise, with his nobles, gave him rich presents, and he granted him leave to collect gifts of gold and silver, and to take them to Jerusalem in aid of the temple; particularly to buy beasts for the purpose of offering them up to God according to the law. The king also ordered the ministers of the holy religion to be free from all taxes; and he authorized Ezra to appoint wise and just magistrates to govern the people, and to punish those that broke the laws.

When Ezra thought of this kindness of the king, he blessed God, and owned that it was he who put it into the king's heart. And Ezra gladly undertook to fulfil all his commission, and for this purpose went to Jerusalem, accompanied by many chief men of Israel, whom he now persuaded to accompany him.

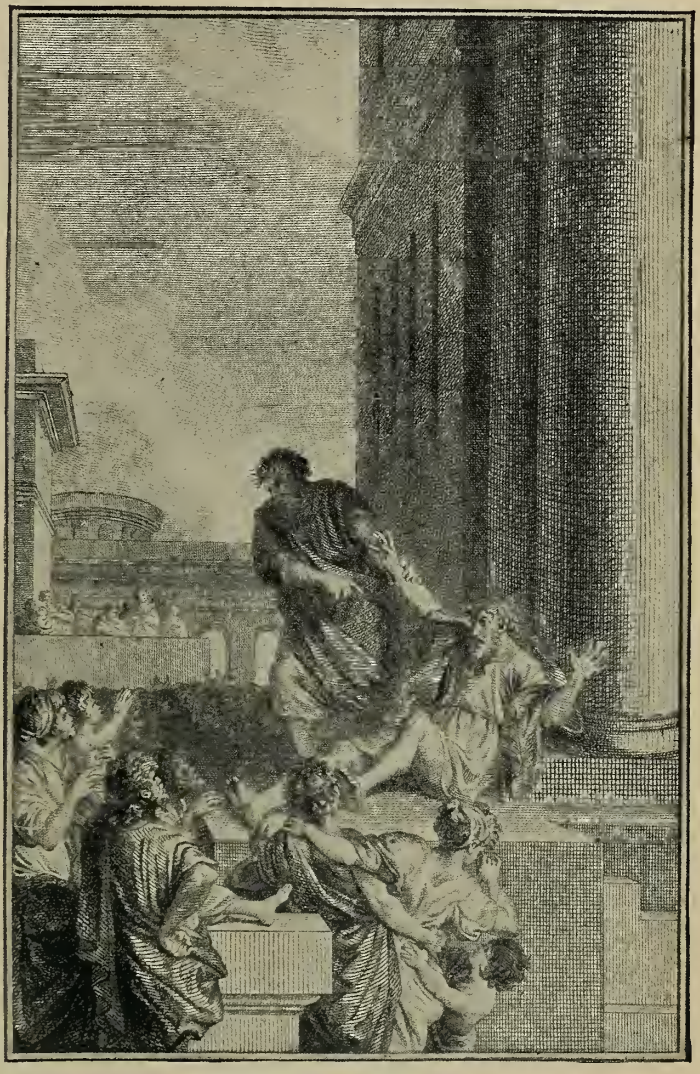
Some of the pious princes went to him in great grief, and lamented that this people had acted in a very ungrateful manner towards God, and instead of serving him more faithfully, united themselves with idolaters, "doing according to their abominations." Widowers had even married Canaanitish and other heathen wives, and sanctioned the same marriages among their sons; not only so, but some of the princes and rulers, who, from their higher rank, ought to have set a better example, had been guilty of the like offence against God's laws.

When Ezra heard these things, he rent his clothes, plucked off the hair of his head and beard, and sat down silent on the ground. These were all customs among the Jews expressive of the greatest grief. While Ezra thus grieved, a number of pious men gathered themselves around him; and at the time of the evening sacrifice, Ezra rose up, fell upon his knees, and lamented the sins of the people, and then left himself and them in the hands of God as a God of mercy.

Seeing his excessive grief, great numbers had now gathered around him, and while he wept they also wept—men, women, and children. At length, one whose name was Shecaniah, acknowledged the guilt of the people, and expressed a hope that they would do the evil complained of no more. He, therefore, advised that all the strange wives, which had been taken against the command of God, should be put away; and the

chief priests, Levites, and all Israel, swore it should be done as Shecaniah and Ezra had proposed.

Within three days after this, all Judah and Benjamin assembled, being called together,—and Ezra told them how they had sinned against God, and entreated them to put away their heathen wives. And they all said they would do so.



THE HEATHEN WIVES SENT AWAY.

Proper inquiry was then made about all their marriages, and in three months the examination was finished. It was found that all classes had some who were guilty; and that, in all, about one hundred and thirteen had married heathen women.

Thus was this reformation effected. Those who did not approve of it had no choice but to be "separated from the congregation;" that is, they were not allowed to worship God in his temple, and were to be cut off from the people, and be left without the hope of true Israelites. Thus, my dear readers, we have no choice between serving sin and serving God. If we continue to serve sin, we must be for ever cut off from his favor; but if we forsake sin and serve him, he is full of grace and mercy, and will not forsake us.

We next come to the state of the Jews at Jerusalem about ten years after the period mentioned in the Book of Ezra, and in the twentieth year

of the reign of Artaxerxes. God so ordered matters that at this time some Jews had occasion to go to Shushan, or Susa, an ancient city in which was the winter palace of the kings of Persia. Nehemiah, a pious Jew, happened to be the king's cupbearer, which was a place of great honor, and gave him an opportunity of being frequently in the king's presence, and that at a time when his heart was cheerful, and he was disposed to be kind and good-natured.

This good man having inquired of his brethren, the Jews, how things were going on at Jerusalem, was grieved to learn that the people were "in great affliction and reproach," and that the wall of the city was still "broken down," and the gates were "burned with fire," as the Babylonians had left them.

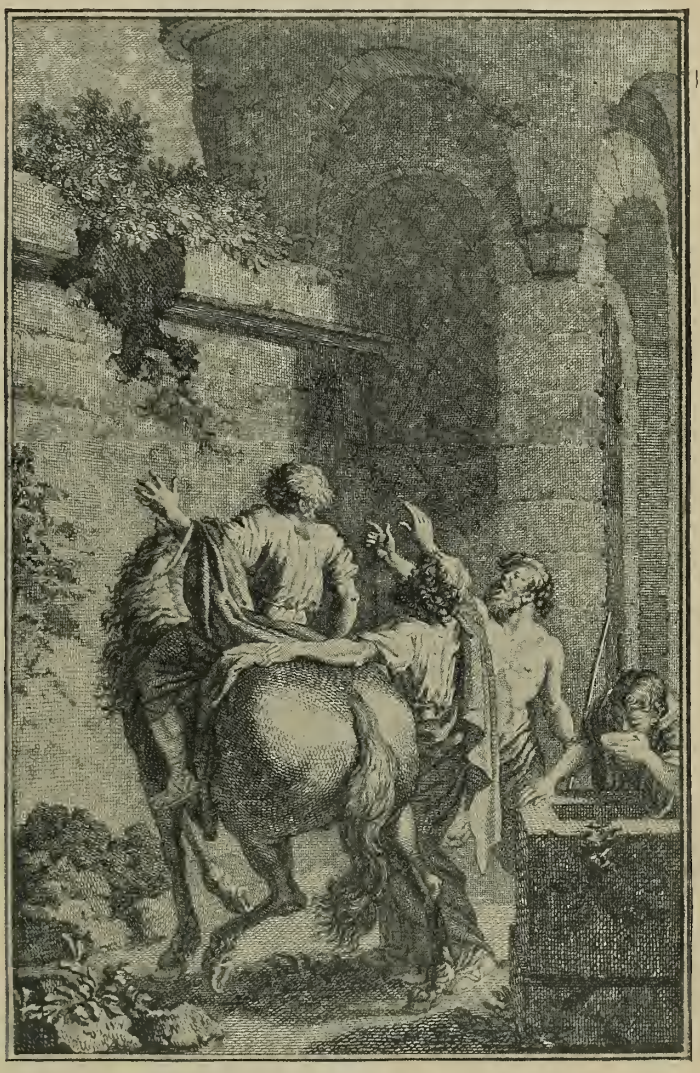
Then Nehemiah was very sorry, and he "wept and mourned" for the sins of his country, which had been the cause of all its suffering; and he "fasted and prayed before the God of heaven," beseeching him in behalf of his people, and that he might find favor with the king, in trying to do something for their good.

At length, when he was waiting on the king, as he did not usually look dull—for good men ought to look happy—the king wondered to see him so dejected. And he told him he had great cause to be sad, for he had learned that the chief city of his beloved country was still in ruins. Then the king wished to know what he could do for him; Nehemiah paused a moment and prayed to God, perhaps thanking him for the favor he had already found with the king, and perhaps, also, asking God for wisdom to give a right answer. Then he asked the king to let him go to Jerusalem, and restore it from its ruins. And the king gave him leave to go, and allowed him to fix his own time for staying.

He next asked the king for letters to the governors of the country through which he should pass, that he might meet with every help from them in proceeding on his journey; and also for a letter to the keeper of the king's forest, that he might obtain from him any quantity of timber that might be necessary, for the workmen to use in rebuilding what was broken down. This, too, the king granted. Nehemiah sees all his success as coming from God, and he says, "The king granted me according to the good hand of my God upon me."

Nehemiah now set off, accompanied with a guard of honor from the king, to protect him all the way till he reached Jerusalem. Nehemiah

thought it prudent to make no bustle about what he was going to do, lest he should be opposed in his work. So he went in the night time, and looked all over the ruins of the city. And when he had seen what ought to be done, and laid his plans, he called together the chief men of the Jews, and he advised them to build up the wall which surrounded the city; and he told them of God's goodness to him, and of his success with the king. They were so much delighted at this news, that they agreed at once to set to work and build, and encouraged one another in the undertaking.



NEHEMIAH INSPECTING THE RUINS.

Then Sanballat, who was a Moabite, and a governor of the Samaritans, and Tobiah, an Ammonite, who had been raised from a slave, and who was now a governor as well as Sanballat, and Geshem, who was, most likely, an Arab chief,—tried all in their power to frighten the Jews, that they might not go on with their work. But Nehemiah knew what he was about, and he told them that he was sure God would prosper his countrymen, and therefore they should certainly build; and as for those who oposed them, they had no right to meddle with the affairs of Jerusalem, and would do better to mind their own business.

As soon as it was decided that the city should all be built up, every man took his share in the work, the priests first setting the example by

building the sheep gate, which was most likely the gate through which the sheep were brought that were to be sacrificed in the temple. And in addition to the priests, tradesmen and workmen of all sorts helped to build the walls. Even the rulers united in this work, and probably not only by giving their gold and silver, but also their labor.

The nobles of Tekoa were, indeed, exceptions, whose names are mentioned with disgrace, because "they put not their necks to the work of the Lord"—meaning, that the ox works by drawing with his yoke on his neck, but they would have no yoke; or, in other words, they refused in any way to afford aid, and did not care at all about their city. The daughters of Shallum, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, were also among those that assisted.

While this work was going on, Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, was much mortified, and tried to stir up the army which he commanded; and he said, "What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day?"—meaning, perhaps, that, unless they made very great haste indeed, they would find that a stop should be put to their work. "Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?"

And Tobiah, the Ammonite, joined him, and laughed at the idea of the Jews being able again to build up their wall with such rubbish as they had got: "Why," said he, "if a fox go up, it shall even break down their stone wall,"—it will not bear his weight.

This came to the ears of Nehemiah, who felt for the honor of his God; and he was grieved, and prayed to God to take notice of his adversaries, leaving it in his hands to do as he in his wisdom and justice should think right.

In the meantime the Jews proceeded so rapidly, that they soon carried up the wall all round the city, to half its proper height. Sanballat and his companions now found that while they were mocking the Jews were working, and when they had learned that they had really built so much, their sneerings were turned into rage: "they were very wroth." Then they "conspired all of them together, to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it."

Nehemiah, however, still went on with the work, and while his adversaries threatened he prayed. He met all the increasing appearances of danger with increasing caution. He placed people with swords, spears,

and bows behind the lower walls, which might be attempted before they were raised to their proper height; and he also put men on the higher places or towers, to have the greater command of the enemy, and then he encouraged the people by an animating speech. "Be ye not afraid of them," said he, "remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your houses." However, when the adversaries saw that the Jews were aware of their intentions, they gave up the contest.

REBUILDING THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM.

Nevertheless, Nehemiah did not give up his caution, for he knew that he had a bitter and a subtle foe to deal with. Some men were still kept ready for any conflict, and all worked with one hand, and held a weapon with the other, or at least had it close at hand, or girt about them; and some of the more weighty weapons were committed to the care of others near at hand—the spears, the shields, the bows, and the habergeons, or breastplates, or coats of mail.

Nehemiah also appointed a trumpeter to stand by him, and if he should see any danger, or hear any alarm—as the workmen were divided a great way from each other, all around the city—this trumpeter could blow his trumpet, and call them all to the place where their help was needed. He also ordered all the people to continue in Jerusalem to guard

it by night, as well as to work by day. Thus they went on with the work, and that they might be ready to meet any attack, they never even pulled off their clothes, except when it was necessary to send them to be washed. Finally the work was finished.

Nehemiah ordered that the gates of Jerusalem should be kept shut every morning, till the sun became hot; that is, till it was likely there were plenty of people risen to defend the city from any attempts to enter it by the gates. A similar custom is still to be found among the inhabitants in the parts of the world about Judea; for travelers inform us, that if a traveller arrives after sunset he finds the gates shut, and on no consideration will they open them till the next morning, so that those who come late are obliged to lodge in the plain. Nehemiah further desired, that care should be taken to see that the gates were kept closed, and that proper persons should be always on the watch to prevent surprise from their enemies.

Jerusalem had not yet recovered its inhabitants. The city was still as large as it was when it was full of people; but the people who returned from the captivity in Babylon, had not all taken up their abode there, "and the houses were not builded." The number that came out of captivity with Zerubbabel did indeed amount to forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, and many more came with Ezra. Yet a great number chose to settle in the towns and cities in the country, Jerusalem being in such a desolate condition.

So Nehemiah says, "My God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of them which came up at the first, and found written therein, These are the children of the promise, that went out of the captivity." This register directed Nehemiah to find out to what city each family formerly belonged, and who to the city of Jerusalem, "that they might be called upon to come and rebuild their houses, and take up their residence there."

Nehemiah then gives an account of the children of the province of Judea as it was now reduced, who came out of the captivity of Babylon through the decree of Cyrus. He also tells us of the liberality of those who subscribed well for rebuilding the city and the temple; and he concludes by informing us, that in a short time the children of Israel got all fixed in their own cities.

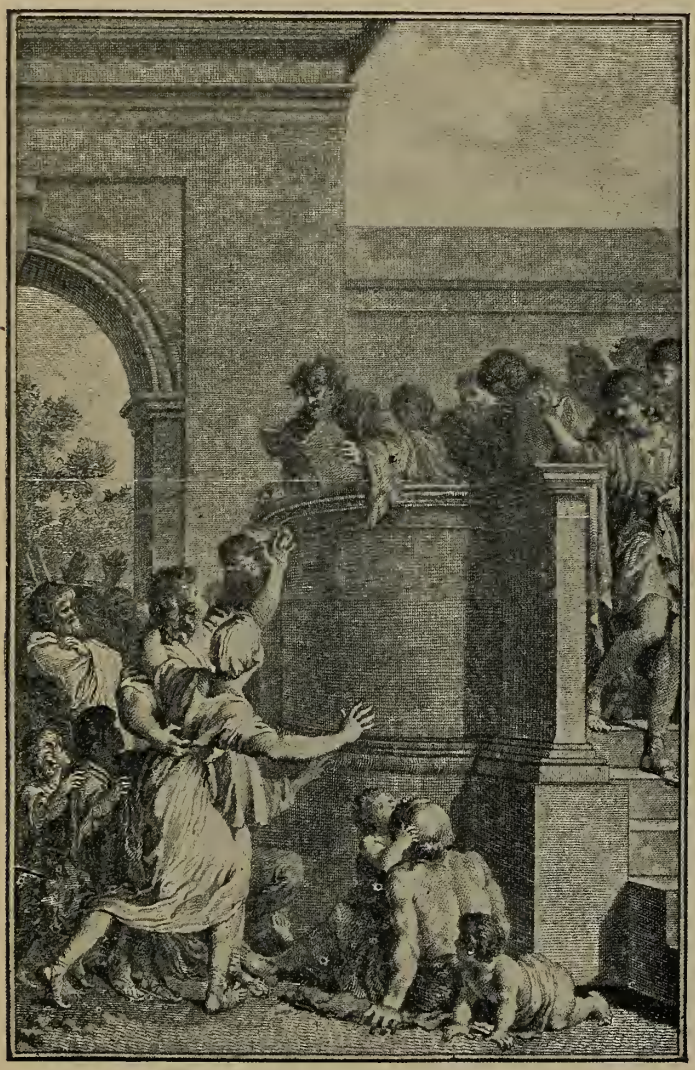
And now we read of a grand assembly of the people, which took place in the open street, because, probably, there was no place large enough to hold them; and that there, Ezra, at the request of the people, read the law of the Lord aloud, "from the morning until mid-day, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law." This was a most serious meeting. The people all stood up to show respect, "Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God," who had given them his holy law, "and all the people answered Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands, and they bowed their heads and they worshipped the Lord, with their faces to the ground."

BRINGING FORTH THE LAW.

There were many others who stood by the side of Ezra, and who most likely sometimes helped him by reading a few portions while he rested; for reading so long in the open air, to so great a number of people, must have fatigued him very much. These also, as well as Ezra, explained such parts as the people could not easily understand.

The people were so much affected, that they all wept when they heard the words of the law, remembering how much they had broken it. And Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, or governor, "and Ezra, the priest, the scribe, and the Levites, that taught the people, said unto all the people,

This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not nor weep." It seems that this meeting was kept on the feast of trumpets, which was on the first day of the Jews' seventh month; and as that was usually a day of joy, it was not keeping it aright to show sadness. So Nehemiah said unto them, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength." So all the people did as they were ordered to do, and were happy.



THE READING OF THE LAW.

On the second day the chiefs of the fathers, or heads of the families and tribes, made further inquiries of Ezra about the meaning of many parts of the law. "And they found written in the law which the Lord had commanded to Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month: and that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written;" that is, as it is written in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, and the fortieth verse.

You will recollect, my dear young reader, that all this was ordered

to be done for the purpose of keeping the *Feast of Tabernacles*, which was held to keep in remembrance the travelling life of the Israelites in the wilderness, after they had been delivered from Egyptian slavery. Now, having been delivered from the Babylonish captivity, and the proper time of the year occurring, it was their special duty to keep the same feast.

So the people fetched the boughs, "and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water-gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. All the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths," during the seven days that the feast lasted, to remind them how their fathers dwelt in booths in the wilderness. Indeed, "since the days of Jeshua," or Joshua, "the son of Nun, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so." Joshua observed the feast when he had brought and settled the people of Israel in the land of Canaan; and it had been observed since, but no Feast of Tabernacles had been so heartily and so piously celebrated.

Nehemiah found out that the Levites had been neglected, and the people cared so little about religion, that not having provided for them, as God had commanded, they had all left the city, and gone into the fields to work for themselves. He also soon remedied this evil, and brought back the Levites, and made the people bring their tithes of corn, wine, and oil, into their treasuries.

There being no regard paid to religion, the holy Sabbath was shamefully abused. God had commanded it to be kept as a holy day, and that no manner of work should be done in it; but on that day they worked their wine-presses, to squeeze out the juice of the grapes for the purpose of making wine; and they carried their corn, and loaded their asses, and traded with the men of Tyre, who were a sort of pedlars, having many wares to sell.

Nehemiah reproved all this sin, and especially the nobles, who ought to have used their authority to prevent it; and he reminded them that because their fathers had sinned in the like way, they, their children, had so long been suffering, and that this was like asking God to punish them again for their iniquity. To prevent any more trading on the Sabbath, he ordered the gates of Jerusalem to be shut from the evening before the Sabbath till the morning after; and, as he could not trust the faithless

men who had been porters at the gates, he set his own people to keep them, that no one should enter the city on the Sabbath with any merchandise about him.

The Tyrian traders did not like to be baulked in their dealings, and lounged about outside the walls on the Sabbath-day, hoping to entice some of the people to come out of the city, and to deal with them. However, Nehemiah was as sharp as they; and seeing what they were about, he told them, "if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you!" and this frightened them so that they did not come any more on the Sabbath.

NEHEMIAH PUNISHING EVIL-DOERS.

A great many of the Jews had also married strange wives "of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab," and their children, instead of understanding their language, to be able to learn the law of God, were only fit for heathen, and knew but the languages of their heathen mothers and nurses, which they had taught them. So these Jews would be the fathers of idolaters. With these men Nehemiah also contended, when they tried to excuse themselves. And he "cursed them;" that is, he denounced the judgments which God had spoken against them; and "he smote certain of them," or ordered them to be beaten, according to the law; and "he plucked off their hair," to shame them, as they had no shame in sinning thus

openly against God. He also obliged them to swear, that, for the time to come, they would never more suffer any such marriages to take place.

Nehemiah, likewise, found out that a branch of the high priest's own family—one of his grandsons—had married a daughter of Sanballat, that notorious enemy of the Jews. How little love had that man either to God or his country, who could make himself, in duty and interest, a friend to him that was a sworn enemy to both! It seems this young priest would not put away his wife, and therefore Nehemiah chased him from him—deprived him, degraded him, and made him for ever incapable of the priesthood.

Thus did Nehemiah reform and benefit his countrymen the Jews, and aim to promote the honor and glory of his God; looking only for his reward in heaven. This is what he meant when he so often prayed, "Remember me, O my God, concerning this." For God does not forget what we do for his glory, though it is our duty to do it, though what we can do is but little, and though he has no need of our services for his own benefit, but all the benefit belongs to ourselves. Young reader! "only fear the Lord and serve him," and he will be sure in his mercy to remember you "for good."

## THE STORY OF JOB.

THERE was dwelling in Uz, in Arabia, a man named Job. Job was a very rich man; he had great possessions of sheep, and camels, and oxen, and asses: he was the greatest man in the east at that time. And Job was a holy man as well as a rich man. The Bible says, he "feared God;" the same God whom Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob feared; and he hoped as they did, to be saved by the Lord Jesus Christ, who was to come into the world to die for sinners. Job had several children; and he taught them to serve God, and prayed for them, and offered sacrifices for them, according to the command of God.

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord; and Satan came also among them." What does this mean? Who were the sons of God, and why did God let Satan come among them? The Bible does not tell us. Perhaps the sons of God were his true and faithful servants who came to worship before him; and, perhaps, Satan came among them, as he comes now among us, to tempt them to sin, and to lead them away from God.

But God spoke to Satan, and said to him, "Whence comest thou?" And Satan answered, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." Then God asked Satan again, if he had considered his servant Job, what a holy and upright man he was, and one who feared God. Satan had long known and hated Job, as he knows and hates all the people of God; and he even dared to accuse Job before God, and to say, that all his goodness was false and hypocritical; and that he pretended to fear God, only that he might be rich, and safe, and prosperous, and not because he really loved him.

God knew all the truth about Job. He knew that Job was sincere, and not false and hypocritical as Satan said; but it pleased God to allow Satan, at that time, to try Job, and to vex and afflict him; and God did this for Job's own good; to make him more humble, more patient, and more believing. So the Lord said to Satan, "All that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand." Then "Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord," to use all the power allowed him, to afflict and trouble righteous Job.

There was a day when Job's sons and daughters were eating, and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house; and there came a messenger to Job, and said, "The oxen were ploughing, and the asses feeding beside them, and some enemies, the Sabeans, fell upon them, and took them away, and have slain the servants with the sword; and I only am escaped to tell thee." And while this messenger was speaking, there came another to Job, and said, "The fire is fallen from heaven, and has burned up the sheep and the servants; and I only am escaped to tell thee."

And while he was speaking, another messenger came, and said, "The Chaldeans fell upon the camels, and carried them away, and slew the servants with the sword, and I only am escaped to tell thee." And while this man was speaking, a fourth messenger came, and said, "Thy sons and daughters were eating and drinking in their eldest brother's house, and there came a great wind, and smote the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped to tell thee."

Poor Job! a very little time before, he had been the richest and most prosperous man in the east. Now, he had lost everything; his flocks and his herds, and his servants, and his children, too,—all were gone. How did he bear so much sorrow? There was one thing Job still had, and that enabled him to bear all this patiently.

Job had not lost his trust in God. He felt quite sure that these troubles did not come without God's permission; and he knew that God would only permit what was right and good for him; so, when Job heard all these sad tidings, though he arose and rent his clothes, to show his sorrow, yet he fell down and worshipped God, to show his submission to his will, and said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

DESTRUCTION OF THE FLOCKS OF JOB.

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. Then God spoke to Satan, as he had done before, and asked him if he had considered his servant Job, who was still faithful, though he had been so tried and so afflicted. But Satan was not satisfied with all the troubles Job had suffered; he wished to vex and afflict him still more; and he told God, that though Job had borne the loss of his possessions patiently, yet, if his body were made to suffer disease and pain, he would then show that he was only a hypocrite after all, and would even curse God to his face. The Lord was pleased, in his wisdom, to allow Job to be still more tried and afflicted, so he said to Satan, "He is in thy hand; but save his life." Then Satan went out and smote Job with sore boils all over his body.

Job had now to bear pain, as well as sorrow; yet he was patient and submissive still. And then he had another and a new trial. His wife was living, and she might have comforted Job in his trouble; but instead of encouraging him to trust in God, she advised him to put an end to his own life;—to kill himself. She said, "Curse God, and die."

But Job reproved her for speaking so wickedly, and said, "What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Job knew that all came from God's hand and by God's permission; and therefore he was willing to receive whatever happened to him, whether it were good or evil.

When Job's friends came to the place where he was, they looked up, and saw him, but they did not know him. He was not now as he once had been. When they last visited him, he was prosperous and happy, with all his family, and all his possessions, and living in honor and peace, the greatest man in the east. But now all was changed. There he sat, alone, among the ashes; his body was covered with a dreadful disease; all his possessions were gone, his children were dead, and he had no one to speak kindly to him, nor to comfort him

The sight made his friends feel sad, and "They lifted up their voice and wept." Then they rent their clothes, and sprinkled dust upon their heads, and sat down with him upon the ground; and for seven days they did not speak a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great. Sometimes when our friends are in very great trouble, as Job was, it is not well to try to comfort them by words. It is kinder and wiser to feel for them in silence.

At last, Job began to speak, and to complain bitterly of all his sufferings. He was tempted even to wish he had never been born; and to murmur, and be impatient, and to find fault with God himself, who had so afflicted him

And did not Job's friends encourage him to trust in God, and submit to his will? No; instead of doing this, they only added to his grief by unkindly and unjustly accusing him. They told him God never would have afflicted him so much if he had not been a very wicked man; for they thought that righteous people were always prosperous, and that only the wicked were afflicted; so, when they saw Job in trouble, they said his sufferings were sent as a punishment for his sins, and they advised him to humble himself before God, and ask for pardon.

Job knew that he was a sinner; he knew that he could not trust to his own goodness and righteousness: he said, "How should man be just before God? If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me." But Job could not believe that all his troubles were sent to punish him for some particular sin; or, because he had been only pretending to serve God, when he did not really love him. No; Job felt that he had been sincere; not a hypocrite, as his friends unkindly said he was; and so when they accused him, he answered, "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live."

Now Job and his friends were quite right in some things that they said, but in others they were very much mistaken. Job's friends were right in advising him to humble himself before God, and ask for pardon; for afflictions are sent by God to lead his people to do this. But they were quite wrong in accusing Job of being a wicked man, and a hypocrite, because he was afflicted; for God often afflicts most those who love and serve him best,—in love, not in anger; "Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth." And though Job was right in saying that he had not brought his sufferings on himself by his own wickedness and hypocrisy, yet he spoke what was wrong, too; for he almost accused God of unkindness and injustice, in afflicting him after he had so sincerely tried to serve God.

Job and his friends were not alone when they talked together. A young man was sitting by, and listening to all they said; but he did not speak until they were silent; for they were older than he, and he thought, "Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom." This young man's name was Elihu. Humility and respect made him keep silent so long; but Elihu had much to say, for God had given him great wisdom; and so, when the others left off speaking, he offered to answer Job himself. Elihu was angry with what had been said. He was displeased with Job, because he had justified himself more than God; and he was displeased with his three friends, "because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job."

So Elihu said, "Hearken unto me, I also will show my opinion." Then they all listened, in silence, to what Elihu had to say.

And how did Elihu answer them? First, he reproved Job for justifying himself more than God. Job had said, "I am righteous, and God hath taken away my judgment;" and "it profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God." This was accusing God of

injustice; it was saying that God had acted wrongly in afflicting a righteous man. But Elihu said, "Far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should commit iniquity; for the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways." Yes; — God is perfectly holy, and perfectly wise; and therefore he will not, he cannot, do anything wrong or unjust; God can never err, never be mistaken.

THE HAPPY DAYS OF JOB.

God often, indeed, acts in a way which we cannot understand; he often does things which perplex us, and which seem to us to be for evil and not for good. But this is because we are ignorant; because we see only a little part of God's doings; because we do not know, as he does, all the past, and all the future; nor see the end from the beginning, as he can. Then, whenever we feel doubtful, and perplexed, and inclined to murmur, like Job, at what God does, let us remember what Elihu said—"God is greater than man; why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters;" and if we feel this, then we shall be willing to trust to his power and

goodness, and say, as Abraham did, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"

Elihu reminded Job of many things, which might teach him how much greater God was than he. He spoke of the eternity of God. He said, "God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out." How can we understand all the greatness of God, when we are ourselves poor, weak creatures, made of dust, and "crushed before the moth?"

And then Elihu spoke of the works of God. He reminded Job of the light, and the thunder, and the clouds, and the rain; and of the wonderful way in which God orders all these things, too wonderful for Job to understand, for "he doeth great things which we cannot comprehend;" and therefore Job was to "stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God."

And now the Lord himself answered Job, and spoke to him out of the whirlwind; and bade him reply to him, if he could. He said, "I will demand of thee, and answer thou me." And then the Lord asked Job, if he could tell how the earth was made, and if he understood the motion of the stars, or was able to rule the sea, and the light, and the darkness. And God spoke to him of some of the animals which he had created, and of the wonderful instinct which he had given them; he reminded Job of the goats, and the wild ass, and the peacock, and the ostrich, and the horse.

Job had seen all these animals; perhaps he knew much of their habits, and their histories; and he might have known, too, much of the other works of God. But Job could not make one of these things, nor even understand how they were made. He could only notice them, and admire them, and wonder at them; and that was all. And if Job could not understand the works of God, how could he understand God himself? and then how could he dare to contend with him, or to murmur at anything he did? Job felt all this.

He felt humbled and ashamed; and therefore, instead of again trying to justify himself, he said, "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further."

And now Job became rich again in this world's wealth, for "the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." "Then came there unto him, all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his

acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house, and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold. So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them an inheritance among their brethren;" and so divided a portion of his property among them, as he did among his sons.

"After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations;" so that he is supposed to have lived about two hundred years. His great age is one reason which guides us to the time in which he lived, as, after the days of Moses, we read of none living to so lengthened a period. "So Job died, being old and full of days."

And when *we* behold the wonderful works of God, we should, like Job, feel our own weakness and sinfulness; and how thankful we should be, that this great Creator is our merciful Father too; "that God is love;" and that he has shown his love by giving "his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life!"

We are also taught that it is God who can make us rich or poor, and so we ought to be contented with what he sends us. When he thought it right to make Job poor, how soon he lost his all; and when he thought it right to make him rich again, how soon he recovered his wealth. God can do everything; let us trust in him, love and serve him, and then we are sure that he will do everything that is best for us, and bring us at last to heaven, where "God shall wipe away all tears from off all faces;" that is, where, what trouble soever may happen to us here, we shall not have any cause to weep any more.

VISIT OF THE WISE MEN

# THE BABE OF BETHLEHEM.

ON the hill where Bethlehem stands there are green places where shepherds feed their flocks. There are wild animals in the country of Palestine. There used to be even more wild beasts there than there are now, jackals and foxes, lions and bears, hyenas, leopards, and wolves. But still all night long the shepherds of Bethlehem stay out on the hillside, and watch to see that no harm happens to their sheep.

One night, while the shepherds were watching, lo! an angel of the Lord stood by them, and a bright light shone round about them. And the shepherds were afraid; but the angel said, "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings (or news) of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." And suddenly there were seen with the angel a number of the angels of heaven. And they praised God, and said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

When the light faded, and the song ended, and the angels had gone back into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." So they left their sheep—I dare say they thought that they would be quite safe where the holy angels of God had been; and they climbed quickly over the hillside towards the little town of Bethlehem. And there, in a stable near the inn, the shepherds found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. It was just as the angels had said.

The shepherds could not keep the good news to themselves. They told it to every one they saw, and everybody wondered. And as they went along the hillside back to their sheep again, they felt so full of joy about all they had seen and heard that they went on their way thanking and praising God.

Jesus was the eldest son of his mother. And the eldest sons in Jewish houses belonged especially to God. When they were forty days old they were taken to the Temple, and given to God. And then the father gave a priest of the Temple some money—about four dollars—and

the priest blessed the little child in the name of the Lord, and gave it back to its father: and after that the father and mother took the baby home with them again.

THE HOLY FAMILY.

So, now, when Jesus was nearly six weeks old, he was brought from Bethlehem by Mary and Joseph to the Temple at Jerusalem. I do not know how they came all that long journey of six miles, but very likely Mary

rode on an ox. That was what mothers generally did when they came to the Temple to thank God for giving them a new little baby. The mothers used to take a lamb with them, or two pigeons, as a sacrifice to God. Mary took two pigeons. She was not rich enough to buy a lamb.

Just at the time that Joseph and Mary and Jesus were on their way to the Temple, God put it into the heart of some one else, called Simeon, to go there. Simeon was a good old man who lived in Jerusalem. He was one of those who were longing for the Messiah to come to make every one happy and good, the Jews and the Gentiles too, and God had promised him that before he died his eyes should see the Messiah. Directly Mary and Joseph brought the Child Jesus into the Court of the Women, Simeon knew that this was the Messiah God had promised to send, and he took him up in his arms, and thanked God; and he blessed Joseph and Mary,

Just as Simeon was speaking, a good woman, called Anna, came into the Court of the Women. Anna was very old, about eighty-four. She lived in the Temple always, and prayed to God a great deal in the night as well as in the day. You may imagine how happy she, too, felt when she saw Jesus Christ. She did exactly as the shepherds had done; she thanked God, and she told the good news to others in Jerusalem. That is just what we must do when we know about Jesus, and love him. We must thank God for sending him to die for us, and we must tell other people also about him. After that happy day in the Temple, Joseph and Mary went back with the Child Jesus for a little while to Bethlehem.

On the right hand, or eastern side of Palestine, there were some countries where the people used to watch the sun and the moon and the stars very carefully. If they saw anything new and strange in the heavens, they thought a great deal about it. They always thought that it meant that something wonderful was going to happen. Some of those people in the East thought more about the sun and the moon and the stars than they did about the God who created the heavens. But some of them had learned better. They had learned from the Jews about God, and about the Messiah who was coming; and they, like the Jews, were longing for the Messiah.

One day, as these wise and good men were watching the sky, they saw a bright star which they had never noticed before. And as they looked at it they felt sure that a very great King of the Jews had been born in Judæa. As soon as God whispered that secret into their hearts,

CHRISTMAS—THE SHEPHERDS AND THE MANGER.

they took camels and rich presents of gold and sweet-smelling stuff—such as people gave to kings in those days—and they loaded their camels, and left their homes, and travelled for many weeks till they came to Jerusalem. And when they got there they said, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

When Herod heard about these wise men he was troubled. I told you that he had killed two of his own sons because he was afraid they might want to be king instead of him; so no wonder he was frightened when he heard that the Messiah, the great King of the Jews, was born. And Herod's friends were troubled too when the wise men came. And the rest of the people in Jerusalem were troubled. They knew how wicked Herod was, and they thought, "Now Herod will do something cruel to punish us, just because he has been frightened."

But Herod was very cunning. He sent for the most clever priests, and for other clever men, and he asked them to tell him where Christ would be born. And they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judæa." They had read that in the Bible. If Herod had read the Bible, he would have known that himself. Then Herod sent very quietly for the wise men from the East, and he asked them a great many questions about when they first saw the star. And then he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, "Go and search out carefully about the young Child, and when ye have found him bring me word, that I also may come and worship him."

Did Herod want to go and bow down his head before the Child Jesus, and call him his King, and bring him presents? Ah! Herod, we know better now. But the wise men believed him just then. When they had heard the king, they went away to Bethlehem, as he told them; and lo, the star which they saw in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. And when the wise men saw the star standing still, they rejoiced with great joy. They knew that they had now found the One whom they had come so far to seek.

And when they were come into the house (I suppose there was room in the inn now) they saw the young Child with Mary, his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him, and they gave him their presents —gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

But the wise men did not go back to Herod, to tell him that they had found Jesus. God came to them one night when they were asleep, and told them in a dream not to go. So they went home to their own

country by another way instead. Why did not God let them go back to Herod? Ah! you will see.

After the wise men were gone back to their own country, the angel of the Lord came to Joseph in his sleep, and said to him, "Arise, and take the young Child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word, for Herod will seek the young Child to

THE CHILD JESUS IN EGYPT.

destroy him." That meant to kill him. So Joseph at once got up, and took the young Child and his mother by night, and went away into Egypt.

When Herod found that the wise men did not come back to him, he was very angry indeed, and he sent his soldiers to Bethlehem, and had all the baby boys killed—all the children who were less than two years of age. And they killed all the baby boys in the places near Bethlehem as well. And the poor mothers cried, and nobody could comfort them.

But Jesus was out of Herod's way by that time. Herod had nothing to do with Egypt, because Egypt did not belong to the Romans. So Jesus was perfectly safe there. The king of Egypt who was living just then was

so kind to the Jews that a very great number of them had gone to live in his country. So Joseph and Mary would be sure to find plenty of friends there, and plenty of work to do.

Joseph and Mary stayed on quietly in Egypt, waiting for the angel to bring them word that it was time to go back again to Palestine. And one night, I think it was when Jesus was about three years old, the message came which they were expecting. The angel of the Lord came to Joseph in a dream, and said to him, "Arise, and take the young Child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young Child's life."

Directly God spoke Joseph obeyed. It was always so with Joseph. He got up, and he took the young Child and his mother, and went into the land of Israel. But when he came there people said to him, "Herod is dead, but his son Archelaus is king." And when Joseph knew that Archelaus was king, he was afraid to stay in Judæa. And God spoke to him again in a dream, and told him to go back to Galilee, the part of Palestine where he lived before Jesus was born. So Joseph and Mary went back to Galilee, and lived in their own city of Nazareth again.

The Bible does not tell us much about the time when Jesus was a little boy, but it does give us a few stories. And a great many persons have been to Palestine, and have told us about Nazareth. Nazareth is a little town which is built up the side of a hill. Other hills stand round it—and there are plenty of gardens and fields down below. Amongst these fields and gardens there is a fountain, where the women of Nazareth go to fetch water. Jesus must often have gone with his mother to that fountain; and I dare say that sometimes, when she was tired, he may have fetched the water for her himself.

Most likely Mary wore a long blue dress, tied round the waist, and a cap with pieces of money sewn around it, and a white cloth over her head and shoulders, just as the women of Nazareth do now; and Jesus was very likely dressed in a red cap, a bright tunic, a sash of many colours, and a little loose jacket of white or blue, just as the boys of Nazareth are dressed now. People do not alter their way of dressing in that country as we do in England.

We know that in the spring-time, wherever the Child Jesus went round about Nazareth, he saw flowers and brightness. The hills and the fields near there are lovely in spring with daisies, crocuses, poppies, tulips,

lilies, and convolvulus, with marigolds and mignonette, and many other flowers. Great butterflies and many-coloured birds fly about, little owls with great eyes make a mewing noise in the olive trees, and the lark goes singing up into the air. The very trees are like nosegays of white and scarlet flowers, and are beautiful with their light and their dark green leaves. In summer the sun shines down on the flowers of Nazareth, and quickly withers them up, but it makes the corn and the oranges ripe, and the grapes and the figs too, and many other things that are good to be eaten.

Would you like to know the kind of house that Jesus lived in when he was a child? It would be very much like the houses that people see in Nazareth now. The houses of Nazareth are white. Grape vines grow over their walls, and doves sit and coo on their flat roofs. There is not much inside the houses: sometimes they have only one room. There is a lamp in the middle of the room, and round the walls there are waterpots. There are bright-coloured quilts there too on a shelf. People unroll these quilts at night and lie down upon them. Besides these things, there are mats and carpets in the house, and a bright-coloured box with treasures in it, and a painted wooden stool; and that is nearly all.

When the people of the house want to eat, they put a tray of food on the wooden stool, and they sit round the tray on the floor, and eat with their hands. That is always the way with people in Palestine; they would not know what to do with tables and chairs like ours.

The streets of Nazareth are long and narrow, and they are full of chickens and dogs, of donkeys and camels, of blind beggars and children. There are little shops by the side of the streets, but the tailors, the shoemakers, the carpenters, and the coffee-grinders do not always sit in their shops. They like to sit on the ground outside, and do their work in the street, and the sellers of dates and of figs, beans, barley, oranges and other things sit down in the street to sell their goods. Joseph, Mary's husband, was a carpenter, and Jesus became a carpenter; and often, I dare say, they would come out of their little shop, and sit on the ground with plane, hammer, glue and saw, and work away in the narrow street, just as the carpenters of Nazareth do now.

There used to be in Nazareth a synagogue, a sort of church where the Jews went twice every day to pray and to hear the Bible read. We know that Jesus often went there. Most likely too he went to school, just as our American boys do now, for the Jews used to be very particular

CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE — DISPUTING WITH THE DOCTORS

about their children being taught. What do you think they liked them to learn first of all? The Bible. They began to teach the little children the Bible and the synagogue prayers as soon as they could speak; and they thought that the little children ought to be able to read the Bible when they were five years of age.

The Jews called the Bible the Law. Their Bible was the same as our Old Testament. Ours tells all about the life of Jesus Christ, and theirs could not do that. And their Bible was not printed and bound like ours, with pages to turn over. It was written out by hand, and was rolled and unrolled instead of being opened and shut.

When the Jewish boys were twelve years old, they were called "Sons of the Law," and they were allowed to go to Jerusalem for the Passover. I cannot stop just now to tell you exactly what the Passover was like, and why the Jews had it. But it was a very grand time of offering sacrifices to God, and it lasted a week. All of the Jews who could possibly manage to go, went up to the Passover. Such a number went that there was no room for them inside Jerusalem, and they had to put up tents, or build themselves little arbors, on the hills outside the city.

When Jesus was twelve years old, Joseph and his mother took him up with them to the Passover. That must have been a wonderful journey for him. How pleased he must have been to see the great marble and gold Temple!

When the week was over, Mary and Joseph started for the journey back to Nazareth. But Jesus stayed behind them in Jerusalem. Thousands of people must have been leaving Jerusalem just at the very time that Mary and Joseph went away. Fancy what a confusion there would be! When Mary and Joseph did not see Jesus in the crush they did not at first feel frightened. They thought, "We shall find him soon with some of our relatives and friends." But no. All day long they kept on looking for him in the crowd, but they did not see him. And as the crowd grew less and less—when some of the donkeys and camels and people went one way, and some another—and still they did not see their Child, they grew frightened, and they went back again to Jerusalem, looking for him.

Next day they found him. Can you guess where he was? He was in one of the courts of the Temple. The Rabbis of Jerusalem had their schools in the courts of the Temple. There was a verandah on the inside of the walls round the Court of the Gentiles, and I suppose they used to

sit there. The Rabbi had a high seat, and his scholars sat on the ground before him. Jesus was sitting in one of those schools. He was listening and asking questions. Several Rabbis were there, and every one who saw and heard him was astonished. They asked him questions too, and he answered them wisely and well. Nobody could understand how a young boy could be so wise.

When Mary and Joseph saw Jesus sitting here, with Rabbis coming all around him, they were greatly surprised. But his mother asked him

NAZARETH.

why he had stayed behind, and said, "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Mary called Joseph the "father" of Jesus because he had taken care of Jesus, as your father takes care of you. Jesus used to behave to him exactly as if he were his father. But the Holy Spirit had taught Jesus that he was the Son of God as well, and that he had God's work to do in the world, and he said to his mother, "How is it that ye have sought me? Wist ye not (did you not know) that I must be about my Father's business?" They did not understand that he was speaking about

his Heavenly Father. But Mary remembered what Jesus had said, and thought about it afterwards.

And now he went back with her and with Joseph to Nazareth, and obeyed them, exactly as he always had done. We do not know much more about Jesus when he was a boy, any more than we do about John. But we do know that he was always growing stronger and wiser, because he was full of the Holy Spirit of God. And we know that as he grew taller—from a boy into a man—he "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

The great Roman Emperor Augustus was dead, and now there was a very wicked emperor in Rome called Tiberius. There was no cruel King Herod in Jerusalem now, but there was another bad man, called Pontius Pilate, whom the Jews had to obey, who was more cruel still. Pontius Pilate took the Jews' money, and sold their fields, and put them into prison, and killed them too, if he chose, when they had done nothing at all to deserve it! And the Jews were more wretched than ever. They longed more than ever for the Messiah. The Rabbis, who were wise teachers, and the priests could not comfort them. The Rabbis were dreadfully proud, and many of the priests did not really love God. So how could they help other people?

Some of the Jews really longed to please God. The Rabbis told them to wash their bodies, but they wanted to have clean hearts, and the Rabbis could not tell them how to manage that. So many of them thought, "We will go away into the wilderness (that meant, to the country places outside the towns). We will leave the cruel Romans, and the proud Rabbis, and all the priests too, behind; and we will wash often, and pray often, and think about God a great deal; and we will try hard to make ourselves holy." And numbers of the Jews did go away to the hills and caves of Judæa, and they lived long and quietly there, instead of living in the towns. I will tell you about one of the Jews who did that.

You remember about the baby God sent to Zacharias and Elizabeth —the child that was called John. Zacharias and Elizabeth gave John to God directly he was born. They never cut his hair, and they never let him drink wine, or eat grapes, or eat raisins. That was to show that he belonged to God. That was the way people did in those days.

And when John was old enough to understand, he gave himself to God. And as he grew still older, he made up his mind that he would

leave his home and his friends, and go away and live in a wilderness, as those other Jews had done. So he dressed himself in the poor dress that the Arabs—the children of Ishmael—wear, and went into the wilderness; and his food there was locusts and wild honey.

Locusts are something like large grasshoppers, and poor people in the East often eat them. They taste something like shrimps, but are not so nice. There are always a great many locusts in the wilderness of Judæa, with wings of many different colors—scarlet, crimson, blue, yellow, white, green, or brown wings. There are wild bees in the wilderness of Judæa too, which fly about, and collect honey, and put the honey in the holes of the rocks. So John was always able to find his food close at hand.

And here, in the wilderness, John stayed alone and prayed. We do not know what he said, but I am sure that he asked God to take away his sins, and to take away the sins of the other Jews, and to let the Messiah come soon.

God had said that John should go before the Messiah to prepare the way for him—to get people's hearts ready for the Saviour. Well, when John was in the wilderness, God told him to begin the work he had to do. So John went down from the wild hills of Judæa to the River Jordan, which was running deep down below; and he began to preach to every one who passed by. There were many people passing by, for that was where people crossed the Jordan to get into Palestine.

John did not tell the Jews just how they were to sit, and to stand, and to move, and to walk, as the Rabbis used to do. No. He said, "Repent!" (that means, "Be really sorry for your sins",) "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." A very great many people went from Jerusalem, and out of all the land of Judæa, on purpose to hear John preaching. And when they had heard him, some of them said to him, "What shall we do then?" And John told them that they were to be kind to one another—they were to give food to the hungry and clothing to the naked.

Some of the people listening to John had to collect money for Pontius Pilate to send to Rome; they were called publicans. The publicans said, "Master, what shall we do?" And John told them that they must collect money honestly and fairly. Some Roman soldiers came too. The Roman soldiers used to be allowed to knock the Jews about as much as they liked, and the Jews were not allowed to complain. Those soldiers

said to John: "And what shall we do?" And John told them not to be rough, and not to tell lies and get people punished for nothing; and he told them to be contented with their wages. To be contented means to be pleased with what we have got, and not to tease for anything more.

Some even of the proud Rabbis came down to the Jordan to John, and John told these Rabbis that they must not be proud because they were Jews, but must try to be good really and truly. A great many of the people who listened to John felt sorry for the things they had done, and they told John how sorry they were, and John baptized them in the river Jordan. Did John think that he could wash away the sins of the people by baptizing them? Oh no! He told the people that he could only baptize their bodies with water, but that some one else was coming who would be able to baptize their hearts with the Holy Spirit. Whom did John mean? It was Jesus.

## JESUS BEGINS HIS WORK.

AFTER John had baptized a great many persons, he saw, one day, somebody quite new coming to him for baptism. That somebody was a man about thirty years old, and when John looked at him he could see in a minute that he was quite different from the rough soldiers, the cheating publicans, the proud Rabbis, and all the rest of the people who had been to him before. Yes, love and truth and goodness of every kind shone out on that man's face, and John, the holy John, felt, by his side, that he was only a sinner, and he said to him: "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?"

Can you guess who that holy man was? It was Jesus. Jesus had come to be baptized before he began his work as the Messiah for two reasons. He wanted to obey God in everything; and he wanted to show that he was the brother and friend of all the people whom John had been baptizing. And so, as Jesus wished it, John went into the river Jordan with him and baptized him. Jesus was praying all the time to his Heavenly Father, and when he came out of the river, John saw the heavens open, and the Holy Spirit of God, like a dove, coming down on Jesus. And lo! a voice was heard from heaven which said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

When Jesus had been baptized, and was full of the Holy Spirit, he

THE FRUIT
OF THE
SPIRIT
IS
LOVE
Gal. v. 22.
J. H. Kipsley

did not go straight back to his mother and to his home in Nazareth. No. He went away into a wilderness. I dare say he wanted, like John, to think about all the work he would soon have to do, and to be alone for a little while with his Heavenly Father. Ah! and Jesus would have something else too to do in that wilderness. He would have to fight with Satan. God had promised Adam and Eve that Jesus would do that, and the Holy Spirit whispered in Jesus Christ's heart that the time for a great battle with Satan had come.

We do not know exactly where it was that Jesus went. It must have been a very lonely place, for there were wild beasts there, and we know that wild beasts generally live as far as they can from houses and men. Perhaps he went to a wilderness near Jericho, which is full of yellow and white rocks and great caves,—a wilderness where no grass grows and where no trees are to be seen.

For a great many days after Jesus went into the wilderness, he did not think about eating. His mind was quite full of other thoughts. But at last, at the end of forty days, he felt hungry. And then when he looked round, there was nothing to eat. All around him, on the ground, there were stones, great stones; but there was nothing else at all.

And now, when Jesus was tired and hungry, and weak for want of food, Satan came to him in the lonely wilderness—just the same as He came to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden—on purpose to tempt him. Perhaps he had come to Jesus many times before in those forty days. I am not sure about that. But at all events he came now.

To tempt means to try. Mother tries you sometimes, to see whether you can be trusted, and God tries us sometimes. But if God tries us it is to make us better, and if Satan tries us, it is to make us worse.

When Satan came to the happy garden, how did he tempt Eve? He tried to make her take some food which God did not mean her to have. He often tempts little children like that. And that was just the way he tempted Jesus now. He knew that Jesus was hungry, and so he said: "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

Satan must have known that Jesus was the Son of God, as well as being man. He need not have said "If." Yes, and the Son of God could easily have turned stones into bread. Doing a wonderful thing like that is called working a miracle, and Jesus often afterwards worked a miracle when he wanted to do good to other people. But he would not work a

miracle for himself. He knew quite well that his Heavenly Father would give him food when the right time came, and he was willing to wait.

When the devil found that it was of no use to tempt Jesus as a man through his hungry body, he tried another plan. He knew that the Jews hated the Romans and wanted a king of their own, and he knew that Christ was a Jew, so he thought he would tempt him as a Jew, and this was what he did. He took Jesus to the top of a very high hill, and he showed him all the countries that belonged to the Romans. And then he said that if he would fall down at his feet, and pray to him, he would give him all those countries.

Ah! but they were not Satan's to give. Besides, Jesus had not come into the world to fight with the Romans, and to make himself King of Jerusalem. He had come to fight with Satan, and to become King of people's hearts. And besides that, nothing would ever have made him pray to Satan. So that temptation was of no use at all.

Satan tried one other plan. He took Jesus to the top of the wonderful marble Temple in Jerusalem, and then told him to throw himself down. He said that if Jesus were the Son of God, the angels would take care of him, and would not let him get hurt. But Jesus would not think of doing such a thing as that, not even to make people see and believe that he was the Son of God. We must never do foolish and dangerous things, and say, "Oh! God will take care of me." That sort of faith does not please God.

Jesus had now been tempted in three ways: (1) as a man—a hungry man; (2) as a Jew; (3) as the Son of God. But it was all of no use. Satan had to go away at last, quite disappointed. He could not possibly make Jesus do anything wrong. And now God's angels came to bring Jesus food and everything that he wanted. It was well worth while to have waited, and to have been hungry for just a little time longer, and then to be fed by angels instead of being fed by the devil.

Jesus is sometimes called the second Adam, but the first Adam did what Satan told him, though he had everything he wanted, and had no excuse, and the second Adam did not. Every time that Jesus was tempted he said, "It is written," and then he told Satan something which was written in the Bible, something that his Heavenly Father had said. That is the very best way to fight Satan. The Bible is called "the Sword of the Spirit," and Satan is frightened when he sees us using that Sword.

CHRIST AND HIS MOTHER RETURNING FROM JERUSALEM

CHRIST RAISING THE SON OF THE WIDOW OF NAIN

Let us ask God to fill us, like Jesus, with the Holy Spirit, and then we shall soon learn how to use the Sword of the Spirit, and we too shall be able to drive Satan away when he comes to tempt us. Only we must be sure to read the Bible, as Jesus used to do, or else we shall never be able to drive Satan away by telling him the things that God has written there.

John did not always go on baptizing in the same place. I dare say, for one thing, he was afraid that the Jews in Jerusalem would come to stop him. They did one day send some priests to find out whether he was the Messiah, and to ask him what business he had to baptize the people. And John wanted to prepare everybody for the coming of Jesus. So when he had preached long enough to the people of Judæa, he went a long way up the river Jordan till he got to two places near Galilee called Ænon and Bethabara. And he preached and baptized at those places, and the people of Galilee came to hear him and to be baptized, just as the people of Judæa had done.

One day, when Jesus Christ's fight with the devil in the wilderness was over, he came to Bethabara, where John was baptizing, and when John saw Jesus coming towards him, he said:

"*Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.*" The next day John saw Jesus again, and again he said the same words: "*Behold the Lamb of God.*"

John called Jesus the Lamb of God because he was going to die as a sacrifice for our sins. Ever since the time of Adam and Eve lambs had been killed from time to time, to remind people that Jesus would one day come to die for them. And now Jesus had come. So the Lamb of God was a beautiful name for John to give him.

Two men were standing close to John when Jesus came by, and they heard what he said. The name of one of these men was Andrew, and I think that the name of the other was John. Those men were called John's disciples, because John had taught them many things. He had told them a great deal about Jesus, and now that they really saw Jesus you may imagine how delighted they felt! They could not let him go out of their sight. So they left John the Baptist and walked after Jesus as closely as they dared. Jesus knew that those two men would like to speak to him, so presently he turned round and asked them what they wanted. "Master," they said, "where dwellest thou?" (that means, "where are you living?") So Jesus invited them to come with him, and see.

Jesus did not really live at Bethabara. His home was at Nazareth, you know. Most likely when he came to Bethabara he made himself a little hut out of branches of trees—just big enough to eat in and sleep in. And now he took the two disciples to his Bethabara home, and he let them stay with him the whole of the day. Oh! what a happy day that must have been!

But Andrew was not selfish. He had a brother called Simon, and he wanted him to be happy too. So he went to find Simon, and he told him that he had found the Messiah, and then he brought him to see his new Master and Friend. So now Jesus had three disciples—John, Andrew, and Simon; and next day he took them away with him from Bethabara to Galilee.

Just as they were starting, or while they were going along, Jesus saw a man called Philip, who came from the very place where Simon and Andrew lived when they were at home. I dare say he was a friend of those brothers. Jesus told Philip to come with him, and he came. But Philip did something else too—something that Andrew did. He went to a friend of his, a very good man called Nathanael, and he told him that he had found Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, and begged him to come and see him. How many disciples had Jesus now? Let us see. John, Andrew, Simon, Philip, and Nathanael—five. And I think that, very likely, John had brought his brother James to Jesus. If so, that would make six.

Directly Jesus came into Galilee he was invited to come to a wedding party, at a place called Cana, and all of his disciples were asked to come with him. We should not like to ask such a number of persons all at once in our country, but the people of the East are very kind about giving invitations. And Jesus went to the wedding because he likes to see people happy, and loves to make them happy.

People often drink more wine at weddings and at other times than is good for them, and a great many people go without any wine at all, so as to set them a good example. That is a very kind and good plan. But in the East it is different. The people there hardly ever take too much wine. So Jesus allowed his disciples to use it, and he drank it himself.

There was some wine at the wedding party to which Jesus went; but presently it came to an end. I do not know how that happened. Perhaps a great number of persons were invited to the wedding just at the last, on purpose to see Jesus, and they helped to drink it all up. Any way the wine was all gone.

But it was very awkward for the people who gave the feast to have no wine left, and Mary thought to herself, "If I ask my Son, he will make some more wine." Then Mary came to Jesus, and said, "They have no wine." Jesus knew what Mary was thinking about, but he had to tell her to wait; and he had to make Mary understand that he could not do everything now which she told him to do, exactly as when he was a boy. He was God's Son as well as Mary's and he had God's work to do, and he must do it at God's time.

But Mary felt sure that Jesus was going to do something kind, and when she went back, she told the servants to do whatever he told them. And Jesus did not keep Mary and the servants waiting long. Close to the house there were six great stone jars or waterpots. Those waterpots were not very full just then. All the visitors had had to wash before dinner, and they had used up a great deal of the water. But now Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And lo! when the water was taken out of the jars, it was water no longer, but wine.

This was the very first miracle that Jesus did, and he did it to make people happy, and to make them believe that he was the Son of God. Dear children, Jesus wants you to be happy. And the very best way to be happy is to ask Jesus to go with you everywhere and always, just as those wedding people asked him to come to their party.

When the wedding party was over, Jesus and his disciples went away from Cana to a town called Capernaum. The mother of Jesus went to Capernaum with him, and some of his other relatives went too. Capernaum was about thirteen miles from Cana. It was close to a lake called the Sea of Galilee. Do you know what a lake is? It is a piece of water with land all round it.

Jesus did not stay very many days in Capernaum. The lovely spring flowers told him that the Passover time was coming, so he went up, with his disciples, to Jerusalem. On the map it looks as if Jesus went *down* to Jerusalem from Capernaum. But Judæa is hilly, you remember, and Jerusalem is built on hills. That is why we say he went *up*.

When Jesus had come to Jerusalem you may be sure that his disciples and he soon went to the Temple. But what do you think they saw when they got inside the great Court of the Gentiles? A regular market was going on there. Men were selling oxen and sheep and doves

for sacrifice. Others were sitting at little tables changing money. And there must have been plenty of noise, for people in the East shout and quarrel a great deal when they are buying or selling, or doing other business.

Some of the people who had come up to Jerusalem for the Passover had travelled from countries far away. Their money was not like the Jerusalem money, so they really wanted it changed. And the priests would only take one particular kind of money, so even the Jerusalem Jews had to go to the money-changers. But the sellers and money-changers had

A STREET SCENE IN JERUSALEM.

no business in the Courts of the Temple. How came they to be there? Ah! they gave the priests money; and the priests loved money more than they loved God. So they let the market go on.

When Jesus saw what was being done, he was angry; and he made a whip with pieces of cord, and he drove away all the people who were selling in the Temple. And he turned out the sheep and the oxen; and he told the men who sold doves to take them away, and not turn his Father's house into a shop. Jesus upset the tables of the money-changers

too, and poured out their money. Those money-changers got a great deal of their money by being unfair to other people. Perhaps that was one reason why Jesus poured their gold and their silver away.

We feel shocked about those money-changers and sellers of animals. But I am afraid that often we are very much like them. We do not take oxen and sheep and doves into God's house. But often we take silly thoughts and idle thoughts and wrong thoughts with us. And we do not change money, and do other things like that when we go into God's house. But often when we are kneeling down, in church or at home, we begin to think about our work and our play. People who come in suppose we are praying; but Jesus sees into our hearts, and he whispers: "Send those thoughts away. Do not make my Father's house a place of business."

Jesus did a great many wonderful things when he was in Jerusalem that Passover time, and many persons saw his miracles, and thought, "Yes, this is the Messiah." But Jesus did not trust any of those people. He knew that they did not really love him.

But there was one man in Jerusalem who did want to be Jesus Christ's disciple. His name was Nicodemus. He was a great Rabbi, but not proud like the other Rabbis, and he wanted to ask Jesus a great many questions. The other Rabbis and the priests did not like Jesus at all, because he did not teach the people the same things that they did. And Nicodemus was quite frightened, lest those other Rabbis and the priests should see him coming to Jesus. So he came to Jesus by night—in the dark.

What did Jesus say when he saw Nicodemus? Did he say, "You are not brave, Nicodemus; I am ashamed of you; go away?" Ah no! He talked kindly to him, and he told him that he would have to be born again. He meant that Nicodemus must ask God to send him his Holy Spirit, and to give him a new heart. And then Jesus explained to Nicodemus why he had come down from heaven. He said: "*God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

I wonder whether you can say those beautiful words. If not, I do hope that some day you will learn them. Nicodemus never forgot the things Jesus taught him that night. And soon the Holy Spirit came into his heart and made it clean and new. And when Nicodemus was born again, he grew braver and braver; and at last he did not care at all what the priests and the other Rabbis thought about him. No, indeed, for Nicodemus had become a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

# JESUS IN GALILEE.

WHILE Jesus and his disciples were in the land of Judæa, baptizing and teaching, and making sick people well, something very sad happened. Do you remember about Herod the Great, who was king of the Jews when Jesus was born? That wicked King Herod had several sons; and when he died the Holy Land was divided into three parts by Augustus Cæsar, the Emperor of Rome, and it was given to three of Herod's sons. Two of those sons were called Herod, like their father. One was called Herod Antipas, and the other was called Herod Philip. Galilee and Perea were given to Herod Antipas.

Herod Antipas ought to have been contented. Galilee was the most beautiful part of the Holy Land. But he was not contented; he was selfish; he wanted all the good things. And he actually stole the wife of one of his brothers, and married her himself.

John the Baptist heard what Herod had done, and he told him that it was very wicked indeed. John always told poor people about the things they did wrong, and you see he was not afraid to tell rich people—even kings—when they had done wrong too.

Herod ought to have been sorry, but he was not. He was angry; and he sent soldiers, who seized John and tied him fast, and carried him off to a fortress of Herod's called the Black Castle by the side of the Dead Sea. Half of that castle was a palace, and half of it was a prison; and John the Baptist was shut up in the prison.

When Jesus heard that John was in prison, the Holy Spirit whispered in his heart that it was time for him to go back to Galilee. People were beginning to talk a great deal about the wonderful things he was doing, and Jesus knew that if he stayed in Judæa any longer, the Rabbis or King Herod would soon try to stop him. So he went.

If you wanted to go from Judæa to Galilee, the nearest way would be through Samaria. But the Jews did not like to go that way. Very often they crossed the River Jordan, and went up through Perea, and then crossed the river again to get into Galilee. They did that because they did not like the Samaritans.

The Samaritans used once to be heathen. And so, even when they began to pray to God, the proud Jews would have nothing to do with

them. The Samaritans were very much disappointed about that, but they thought, "Never mind, we will have a temple of our own. God will like our temple better than the one at Jerusalem." So they built themselves a temple at the top of a mountain in Samaria; but the Jews pulled it down. And the Samaritans were angry with the Jews, and did unkind things to them, and the Jews did more unkind things to the Samaritans, and so it went on. They hated one another. The Jews would not even eat the Samaritan food if they could help it.

But Jesus loved them all, both the Jews and the Samaritans. And when he had to go to Galilee, he made up his mind to pass through Samaria. It was a long, rough journey, between hills, over stones, and up long rocky stairs where stinging scorpions are found. But at last they came near a town. There was a well near that town called Jacob's Well, because Jacob made it when he lived in Shechem. Jesus was too tired to go any further, so he threw himself down to rest by the side of that well, while his disciples went on to buy food. *They* did not mind eating Samaritan food. Jesus had taught them better.

It was the middle of the day, so I dare say Jesus was very hot, as well as tired and hungry. But he was not too hot and tired and hungry to do work for his Heavenly Father. While Jesus was sitting by the well a woman came there to draw water. People do not go out much in hot countries in the middle of the day, and the women in the East generally draw water in the morning and in the evening. But this woman was wicked, and I think that very likely she came in the middle of the day because she was ashamed of herself, and did not want people to look at her.

But Jesus spoke to that woman directly, although he knew how bad she was, and he asked her to do something kind for him; he said, "Give me to drink." The woman had a waterpot which she could let down into the water, but Jesus had nothing to draw with, and the well was deep; and yet she felt quite surprised that he asked her for water, and she said to him, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan. Why then do you ask me for water?"

Jesus said, "If you knew who I am, you would have asked me, and I would have given you living water." Jesus meant the Holy Spirit. He gives the Holy Spirit to every one who asks him. The Holy Spirit is like water—living water, because he makes our hearts clean, and because he makes them feel rested and happy. And he is better than water,

because if we drink water we soon get thirsty again; but the Holy Spirit is ready to stay with us as long as we live.

Then Jesus spoke to the woman about the bad things she had done, and she tried to make him talk about something else directly. But she could not stop his wonderful words. At last she said: "I know that the Messiah is coming. He will tell us all things." Then Jesus said to her, "I that speak unto thee am he."

Just then his disciples came up to the well, and they were very

JESUS AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

much astonished to see him talking to the woman. The Jew men were too proud to talk much to women, even if the women were Jews; and this was a Samaritan woman! And besides, Jesus was a Rabbi, a great teacher; and Rabbis did not talk, even to their wives out of doors, where people could see them.

The disciples did not ask Jesus any questions about why he talked to the woman. They brought him the things they had been buying, and said, "Master, eat." But Jesus was so happy that he had been able to

THE PARABLE OF THE LILIES

Matt. 6 : 28, 29 ; Luke 11 ; 27, 28

CHRIST BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN

Matt. 19: 13—15; Mark 10: 13—16; Luke 18: 15—17

speak good words to that poor woman that he did not feel hungry any more. He told his disciples that doing God's work was the food he liked best.

But what do you think the woman of Samaria was doing now? She was like Andrew and Philip, the disciples who went to find somebody else to bring to Jesus. Directly Jesus had finished talking to her, she ran away to fetch her friends.

She was in such a hurry that she left her waterpot at the well, or perhaps she left it there on purpose that all those thirsty disciples might be able to draw water to drink, and when she got to the town, she said to the people there, "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Messiah?"

So the Samaritans came to Jesus, and begged him to stay with them. And he came into the town and stayed with them for two days. And a great many of the Samaritans believed on Jesus when they heard him, and they said, "*This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*" "The Christ" means "the Messiah."

Now we can see why Jesus went back to Galilee through Samaria. He wanted the Samaritans to know him and to love him. They might never have seen him if he had gone the other way. Is not Jesus loving, and thoughtful, and good?

Jesus was a missionary. The woman of Samaria was a missionary. Andrew and Philip were missionaries. I hope, dear children, that all of you will be missionaries too. You can all do something or say some word for Jesus even now; and when you grow up, perhaps some of you will be able to go to tell the heathen about him. Jesus told his disciples, when he was talking to them at the well, that missionary work is like sowing seed. Will you not then begin at once to be little sowers of good seed for Jesus?

When Jesus had finished his little visit to the people of Samaria, he came into Galilee. We do not quite know where he went first, but I think most likely he went to the place where his mother lived—Nazareth. Nazareth was his own city, where he had lived when he was a little boy, and where he had worked when he was a young man. How pleased his mother must have been to see him again after he had been so long in Judæa!

Galilee is only a very small country, but when Jesus lived there it was very full of people. It had hundreds of villages and towns. The people who lived in Galilee were in the dark before Jesus came. The sun

shone brightly on their houses every day, but their hearts were quite dark. They did not know what to believe, and many of them were ill and unhappy. But "The Light of the world is Jesus." And Jesus never tired of going into those cities and villages to preach to the men and women there, and to bless the little children, and to heal the sick.

In the East there is a dreadful illness called leprosy, and the people who have it are called lepers. No doctor can cure it. It begins with spots on the eyelids and on the inside of the hands, and then it spreads all about the body, and makes swellings and sore places. At last the body gets so full of leprosy that the poor leper dies.

At the time when Jesus lived on the earth lepers were not allowed to come into cities. And they had to go about with nothing on their heads, and with their dresses torn, and with their mouths covered over; and when they saw anybody coming they had to call out, "Unclean! unclean!" That meant, "Don't come near me, I am a leper." Nobody was allowed to touch a leper.

One day when Jesus went into a town a leper saw him. The poor man was so full of leprosy and so miserable that he felt he must come to see whether Jesus would do anything for him. He felt sure that Jesus *could* make him well, but oh! *would* he have anything to do with a leper?

Well, he came to Jesus, and he knelt down before him, and fell on his face. People in the East often do that when they want something done for them. And he said, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." And Jesus felt full of pity for the poor man, and he put out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I will; be thou clean." And directly Jesus had said that, the leper was well. Sin is just like leprosy. A baby's naughtiness does not look very bad; it is only like a little spot. But that naughtiness spreads and gets stronger as baby gets older, and nobody but Jesus can take it away.

When the leper was healed he was allowed to go into cities again amongst the people who were well. And if Jesus has washed away our sins in his own blood, we are allowed to go to heaven when we die, and to be with God and the angels, and with all the holy people there. I wonder whether Jesus has taken away your naughty heart yet. If not, will you say this little prayer every day: "*Create in me a clean heart, O God!*" And if you really mean that prayer when you say it, Jesus will make you quite well, just as he did the leper.

Jesus Christ's body must often have felt very tired, for crowds followed him about all the time. They came from Perea, and from Judæa, and from other places too, to see the wonderful new Teacher. And Jesus preached to them all, and healed their sicknesses. The most wonderful sermon that was ever preached in all the world is called the Sermon on the Mount, because Jesus sat down on a hill to preach it. I think that was the day Jesus chose the last five of his disciples.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

There is a mountain, or hill, a few miles from the Sea of Galilee, called the Horns of Hattin. People who have seen that hill think that most likely Jesus preached that wonderful sermon there. It looks exactly like a great saddle, with two pommels, or horns, on each side of it. That is why it is called the Horns of Hattin. One of the horns is flat at the top, and the saddle part is flat. Most likely Jesus went to the top of the horn, and called his twelve disciples together there, because it was a quiet place; and then came

down to the flat saddle part to preach, because there was plenty of room there for the crowd of people to sit down.

The people of Capernaum were delighted when Jesus came back to them again. They crowded to the house, as they did on that wonderful Sabbath evening I told you about, and Jesus preached to them, and healed them. Some Pharisees went to the house too. Presently four men came along, carrying a friend of theirs on a mat or thin mattress. They had to carry him because he had palsy, and palsy is an illness that takes all the strength out of legs and arms, and prevents people from moving about by themselves. We often call that illness paralysis. That sick man was unhappy as well as ill, for he knew that he was a sinner.

These four friends had heard about Jesus, and they were quite sure that he would make the sick man well if he saw him. But how were they to get him into the house? There were a number of persons inside, and all round the door there was such a crowd that it was impossible to get near it. For a little while these four men looked about, and then they thought of a plan. First they went up a staircase outside the house; and then they made a hole in the roof. That was very easy; the roofs of houses in the East are flat, and are often made of scarcely anything else but bits of stick and earth. And then they tied some ropes round the mattress, and let it carefully down into the large room underneath, just before the place where Jesus was sitting.

Jesus was not going to disappoint those four men. He saw that they trusted him. But he did not take away their sick friend's palsy directly; he did something better. He said to him, "Son, be of good cheer (be happy); thy sins be forgiven thee." When the Pharisees who were in the room heard that, they thought to themselves, "Who is this? Who can forgive sins but God only?"

Jesus knew their thoughts, and he said, "Is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' or to say 'Arise, take up thy bed, and walk?'" Then, to show that he was the Son of God, and had a right to forgive sins, he said to the sick of the palsy, "Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house."

And strength came into the poor man's arms and legs at once. He got up, rolled up his mattress, and went away to his house, thanking and praising God. He might well thank God! His sins were forgiven, and his body was well. And as the crowds of people watched him walking

along and carrying his bed, they too praised God, and said, "We never saw anything like this. We have seen strange things to-day." But I am afraid that even then the Pharisees did not believe on Jesus.

## THE STORM ON THE LAKE.

JESUS went again into every part of Galilee to tell people the good news that a Saviour had come. His twelve disciples went with him. Three rich women went with him too. They were called Mary, Susanna, and Joanna. They bought things with their own money for Jesus and his disciples to eat, and they got their food ready for them when they were tired, and waited upon them.

Joanna was the wife of King Herod's steward, so perhaps she was the mother of that boy who had fever—the boy who was made well by Jesus. If so, I do not wonder that she loved to wait upon her boy's Friend and Saviour. He was her Friend and Saviour too, and Susanna's and Mary's, for he had made all of them well when they had been ill. But whatever the holy Jesus did, the Pharisees only hated him more. One day he sent a bad spirit out of a poor blind man who could not speak, and made him quite well. And the Jews from Jerusalem, who were watching Jesus, said that Satan had helped him to do that. Did you ever hear of anything so wicked, or so silly either?

When Jesus went back to the Sea of Galilee, he preached to the crowds again out of a boat. He told them most beautiful stories. They liked these stories so much that they did not care to go away—not even when it was evening. But Jesus and his disciples needed rest, so Jesus told the disciples to go over to the other side of the lake. But even then they were hindered. Some men came, and said that they wanted to be Jesus Christ's disciples. But Jesus said to them: "*The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.*"

Jesus meant that he had no home to call his very own, and that his true disciples must be ready to leave their homes too, if he called them. At last the boat started, and Jesus was so tired that he lay down at the end, out of the way of the men who were rowing, and put his head upon a pillow, and fell fast asleep. There were other little boats going across the lake with Jesus. Perhaps there was not room for all of the disciples in the same boat.

Soon the wind began to blow, and it blew louder and louder. Then the waves curled over and dashed into the boat. Then more waves, and then more, till the boat was nearly full. But still Jesus slept quietly on. The disciples were afraid that their boat would sink, and they came to Jesus, and woke him, and said, "Master! Master! we perish! Lord, save!"

And Jesus arose, and told the wind to be silent, and he said to the sea, "Peace, be still." And suddenly the wind stopped, and the sea was quite quiet. Then Jesus said gently to his disciples, "Where is your faith?" Those disciples might have known that the boat could not sink when Jesus was in it. The disciples were very much surprised, and they felt afraid too. And they said one to another, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the seas obey him?"

And now the boat stopped. It had come to a beautiful town on a hill at the other side of the lake. The town was called Gadara. The people who lived there were almost like heathen. They did one thing which the Jews were never allowed to do. They kept pigs. When Jesus came out of the boat, there were a great many pigs on the side of the hill —about two thousand.

Jesus saw something else too. Two wild men were running down the hill to meet him. Wicked spirits had made those men wild. They were so wild that nobody could do anything with them. They would not put on their clothes, and they screamed and howled, and they cut themselves with stones. Even if they were tied fast with chains, they broke the chains off quite easily. And they were so fierce and so strong that nobody liked to come near them.

But when those men came near Jesus they fell down at his feet, and the bad spirits which were in them begged Jesus to let them alone. Those bad spirits were Satan's servants, and they knew quite well that Jesus was stronger than Satan. They knew that they would have to do whatever Jesus told them.

And Jesus said to one of the men, "What is thy name?" And he said, "My name is Legion." A legion meant six thousand soldiers; but the poor man meant that he was full of evil spirits. Then those bad spirits said to Jesus, "If we must go away, let us go into those pigs." And Jesus said, "Go." And the wicked spirits came out of the man, and went into the pigs. And, at once, all the pigs rushed down the hill into the lake, and were drowned.

It served the men of Gadara right to lose their pigs. They had no business to be keeping them. Those pigs were often used for wicked heathen sacrifices to gods of wood and stone, and Jesus showed that he was not pleased about that. The men who looked after the pigs ran fast into the town of Gadara to tell all the things that had happened, and every one came out of the city to see whether it really was true. Yes. There was one of the wild men sitting quite quietly at the feet of Jesus, with his clothes on. And there was the place where the pigs had been eating; but there was not a single pig left.

And all the people begged Jesus to go away directly. They loved their pigs better than they loved him. There was no room for him in Gadara, no place where he might lay his head, even now that he was so tired. So he went back again to Capernaum.

Just as the boat was starting, the man who was made well came to Jesus, and he begged him to let him stay with him always. But Jesus said, "No. Go home to thy friends, and tell them what great things the Lord God has done for thee." So the man stayed behind, and became a missionary to all the people he met, like the woman of Samaria; for he told them about Jesus, and about what Jesus had done for him.

When Jesus came back to Capernaum he found all the people there looking out for him. They were quite pleased that he had come back so soon. Soon a man, called Jairus, came and fell down at his feet and begged him to go to his house. Jairus had one little girl, about twelve years old, and she was dying. So Jesus and his disciples started to go to Jairus' house, and a great crowd of people went with him.

There was a woman in Capernaum just then who had been ill for twelve years. She had paid such a number of doctors for medicine that all her money was gone. And the worst of it was that the doctors had done her no good. She was more ill than ever. But she heard about Jesus, and she believed what she had heard. She thought to herself, "Jesus is so good and great, that I need only touch his clothes, and I shall be well."

So she crept quietly with her pale face through the crowd till she got just behind Jesus, and then she put out her hand, and touched the edge of his long dress. What had happened? She felt suddenly well and strong again! *We* know how that was.

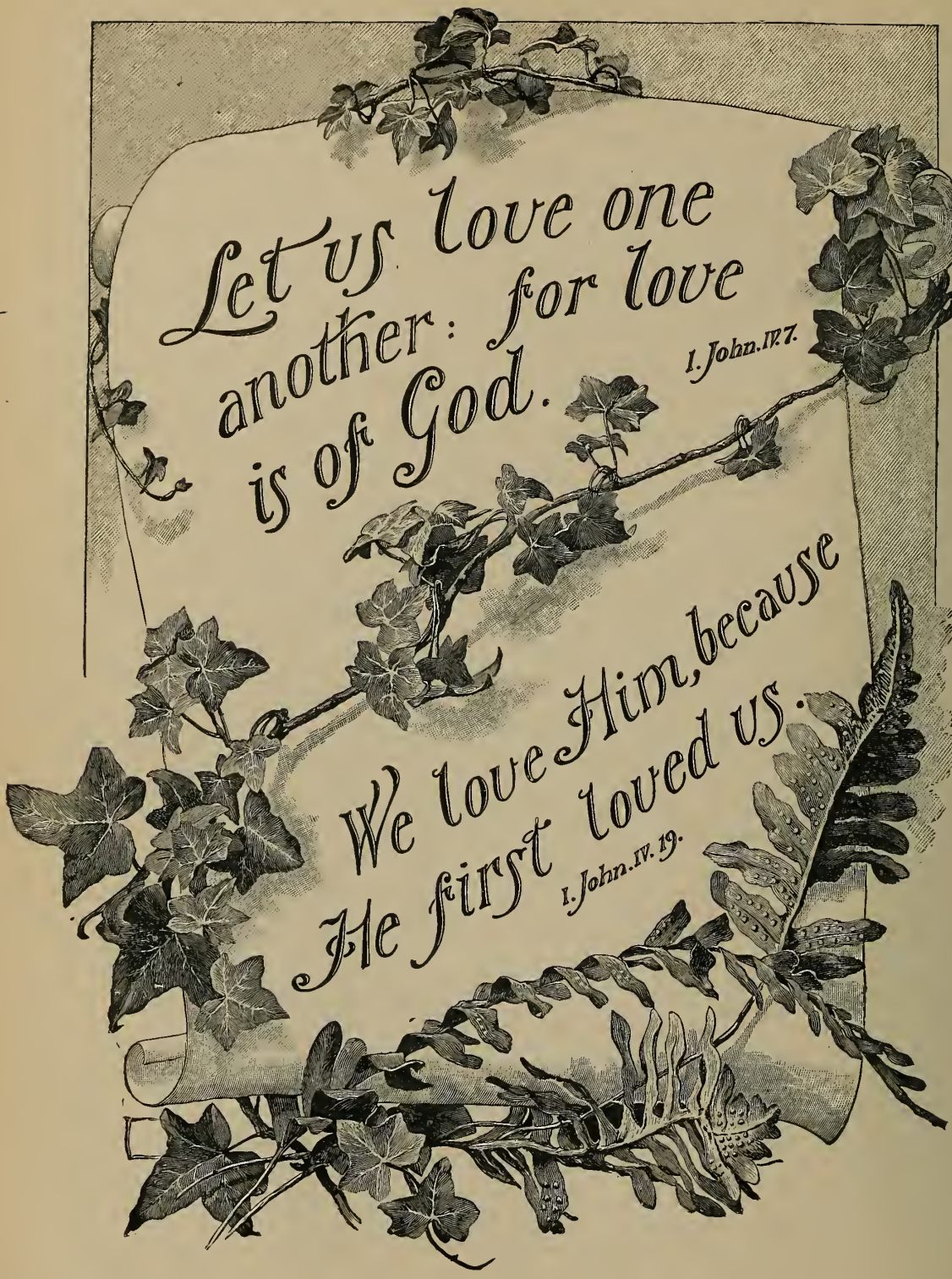
Just at that moment Jesus turned round in the middle of the crowd

and said, "Who touched my clothes?" I suppose the people thought that Jesus did not like to be so crowded up, for they all began to say, "I didn't do it" "It wasn't I." Even the disciples could not understand what Jesus meant. They said, "Master, all the people are crowding thee, and touching thee."

But that poor, shy, frightened woman knew what Jesus meant, and she saw that he knew all about her. So she came and fell at the feet of Jesus before all the people, and told him what she had done. And Jesus spoke comfortingly to the poor woman. He called her "daughter," and he told her to go in peace. Just then some one came to Jairus, and said, "It is of no use to trouble the Master any more. The child is dead." Poor Jairus! how sad he must have felt! But Jesus said to him quickly, "Do not be afraid. Only believe, and she shall be made well."

When Jesus came to the house of Jairus he heard a great noise. As soon as any one dies in the East, people come to the house, and cry and howl, and play wretched music. They are paid to do that. Is it not a curious plan? That was the noise which Jesus heard, and he asked, "Why do you make this ado? The little maid is sleeping." And those rude people laughed at Jesus just as if he did not know what he was talking about. So Jesus turned them all out. They deserved it. Death is not a thing to laugh about, and it was shocking to laugh at Jesus.

Then Jesus took three of his disciples—Peter, and James, and John—and Jairus and his wife; and they went together to look at the child. There she was, lying quite still. Life had flown away from her body. But Jesus took hold of the little girl's hand, and said, "My little lamb, I say unto thee, Arise." And life flew back to her body again, and she opened her eyes, and got up, and walked. And Jesus told her father and mother to give her something to eat. That was what doctors in the East used to do when they wanted to show that they thought a patient quite well; Jesus, the Good and Great Physician, often did the same things as the other physicians of Palestine when he saw that their plans were right and good ones.

When Jesus came out of Jairus' house, two blind men followed him, begging him to make them well. Jesus waited till he had got back to the house where he was staying, and then he touched their eyes, and made them see. And then, just as they went out of the house, another man was brought in. Satan had put a wicked spirit into that man which would not let him speak.

Let us love one another: for love is of God.
I. John. IV. 7.
We love Him, because He first loved us.
I. John. IV. 19.

Sometimes Satan puts a bad spirit something like that into little children's hearts, and then they will not answer when they are spoken to. They only frown, and look cross and sulky. But Jesus can send away all kinds of wicked spirits. He sent away that man's dumb spirit just as easily as he had sent away the noisy spirits at Gadara. Will you ask him to take away the sulky tempers when they come?

The Pharisees still kept on muttering, "It is Satan who helps him to do that." As if Satan would send away himself! The Pharisees could not understand Jesus loving people who were poor, or blind, or lepers. They thought them all unholy and unclean, and would have nothing at all to do with them. Why, those were the very people who wanted Jesus Christ's help.

*Talitha cumi*—the mother said,
As she bent o'er her darling's tiny bed,
And the baby opened her dreamy eyes,
And gazed on her mother with glad surprise.

*Talitha cumi*—the words so dear,
And words that the little one loved to hear,
So gently the spell of her slumber broke,
That the baby smiled when the mother spoke.

*Talitha cumi*—the well-known word
Of tenderest greeting, the maiden heard,
As Jesus bent o'er the little bed
And laid his hand on the sleeper's head.

*Talitha cumi*—my little lamb:
At the gentle summons the spirit came,
And the power of death in the dust was laid,
When the Saviour spoke to the little maid.

King Herod Antipas had had John the Baptist's head cut off in the prison, called the Black Castle, by the side of the Dead Sea. Part of the castle was a palace. It was a beautiful palace, with lovely furniture and a colored marble floor. One day Herod gave a grand birthday party there. The wicked woman he had married, his brother's wife, was at the party.

Her name was Herodias. Herodias hated John the Baptist because he had said that Herod ought not to marry her. And she liked to be a king's wife. She thought that was grand. So she made up her mind to have John the Baptist killed.

Herodias had a daughter called Salome, who danced beautifully. And on that birthday-party day King Herod was so pleased with Salome's dancing that he said, "I will give you anything you ask me for." That was a silly and a wrong promise. Salome went to her mother and said, "What shall I ask?" And Herodias said, "Ask for the head of John the Baptist." And Salome came back quickly, and said, "I want the head of John the Baptist. I want it now." Oh, Salome! Salome was only about fourteen years old, but she had learned her mother's bad ways very fast.

Now, dear children, it is generally wrong to break a promise. But it is not wrong to break a wicked promise. It is wrong to make it. Herod ought to have broken that promise. He was sorry he had made it, but he was afraid of what other people in the party would think if he did not do what he had said. So he actually sent to the prison, and had John the Baptist's head cut off to give to that dancing girl.

John the Baptist's disciples took up their master's body (I suppose it was thrown over the wall of the castle) and buried it. And then they went and told Jesus what had happened. That was the very best thing they could have done. I am sure that Jesus comforted them, and made them feel happy again. But Herod was not happy. He knew he had done a wicked thing, and he felt frightened. But he did not ask God to forgive him.

And now Jesus Christ's twelve disciples came back from their missionary journey. They had a great deal to talk about, and they were tired. But there were always so many people coming to see Jesus that they could get no quiet time at all, no time even to eat.

They were all at the Lake of Galilee again. And Jesus told them to come away with him into a desert place, and rest a while. That desert place was on the other side of the lake, near a town called Bethsaida, where Peter, and his brother Andrew, and Philip lived once upon a time. The desert was a nice grassy place; and there were no houses there, no shops, no people.

Then Jesus and his disciples got into a boat as quietly as they

could, and went away. But some people near the lake caught sight of the boat, and they saw who was in it; and they ran, ran so fast along the shore of the lake that they got to the desert before Jesus was there. It was nearly Passover time, the time when everybody went up to Jerusalem. And soon an immense crowd came round Jesus. The desert place was not a desert any more. No; it was full of people. And when Jesus saw all these lost sheep he felt very sorry for them, and he began to teach them many things.

By and by it got late, and the disciples came to Jesus, and said, "It is late, and this is a desert place. Send the crowds away, that they may buy some food, and find a place to sleep in." But Jesus said, "They need not go away. Give them some food yourselves." And he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy food, that these people may eat?" Jesus knew very well what he was going to do, but he asked Philip just to see what he would say. And Philip said, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread would not be enough for them, for every one of them to take a little."

Jesus said, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." And Andrew said, "There is a boy here with five barley loaves and two fishes; but what are they among so many?" And Jesus told him to bring the loaves and fishes to him. Then Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." So the disciples arranged the crowds in rows on the grass. And when every one was ready, Jesus took the five loaves and the two fishes in his hands, and he blessed them, and divided them, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.

And there was plenty for everybody. Jesus made those loaves and fishes last out till everybody had had enough. And then he said, "Gather up the fragments (that means the little pieces) that are left, that nothing be lost." And the disciples picked the little pieces up, and put them together in baskets. And there were twelve large baskets full—more than they had at first.

Yes, Jesus can make corn grow and fishes swim; and he could make food last out in that wonderful way. But all the same, he would not allow anything to be wasted. Will you remember that, dear children, and try not to waste anything—food or anything else? There were five thousand men in that grassy place, and a great many women and children besides. And when the people saw the miracle that Jesus had done they said, "This must be the Messiah;" and they wanted to make him their king—the king of their country, but not the king of their hearts.

And Jesus, you know, did not wish to be made a king like Herod or Cæsar. He was God, so he was King of kings already. So he made his disciples go away at once in the boat to the other side of the lake, and he sent the crowds away himself. I suppose the crowds were trying to get the disciples to help them to make Jesus a king.

CHRIST SAVES PETER FROM SINKING.

When Jesus was alone, he went up into a mountain and prayed. How glad he must have been to have a little time quite quietly with his Heavenly Father! But now a great wind began to blow, and the waves on the Lake of Galilee began to toss about. The disciples rowed hard, but they could not get on; the wind kept trying to blow them back. But Jesus saw them, and when the night was nearly over, he came to them walking on the sea.

Were not the disciples pleased when they saw Jesus? No; they were actually frightened. They had never seen him walking on the water before, and they could not understand who he was, and they cried out for fear. Oh, foolish disciples! But Jesus was sorry for them, and he spoke kindly to them directly, and said, "Be of good cheer (that means, 'Be glad'). It is I. Be not afraid."

And Peter said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the

water." And Jesus said, "Come." And Peter jumped out of the boat, and walked on the water to go to Jesus. But soon Peter began to think of the rough wind and waves instead of thinking about Jesus, and then he could not get on at all, and he began to sink in the water, and called out, "Lord, save me!" And Jesus put out his hand directly, and caught him, and said, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Then they both came into the boat, and the wind stopped blowing. And the disciples fell down at the feet of Jesus, and said, "Thou art the Son of God."

"I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE."

Then, all at once, they saw that their boat was close to the land. Jesus had brought it there. It was very early in the morning when Jesus and the disciples got out of the boat, but people found out that they had come back, and they ran at once to Jesus; and those people were not selfish. They sent and told their friends who lived quite a long way off about the Saviour; and those friends came too, and they brought sick people with them, lying on mats, and they asked

Jesus to allow those sick persons just to touch him. And every one who touched him was made perfectly well.

The crowds near Bethsaida could not understand what had become of Jesus. They had seen the disciples go away in the boat the night before, but Jesus was not with them then. Where could he be? They wanted him to give them some more food to eat. They had forgotten all about his beautiful words.

At last some of those people came over to Capernaum in boats to look for Jesus, and when he saw them he said, "Ye are looking for me because ye did eat of the loaves."

And then he told them that their souls wanted food even more than their bodies; and he said that God would give them bread from heaven if they really wanted to have it. What does "bread from heaven" mean? Ah, it means Jesus. Jesus said: "*I am the Bread of Life.*"

A little while after that Jesus preached in the synagogue in Capernaum about being the Bread of Life. But the Jews there did not understand him; they did not want to understand him; and a number of his friends went away after they had heard that sermon. They would have nothing more to do with him. They all wanted a king, and bread for their bodies, you see, like the poor hungry people who sat down on the grass. But they did not want a Saviour, and food for their souls.

"A lad hath here five barley loaves"
(Feeble the rising faith and dim),
"But what are they?" Yet at his word
They brought the barley loaves to him.

How honored was the lad whose store
The gracious Master deigned to spread,
For lo! that morsel in *his* hands
Supplied five thousand men with bread.

Small is *our* store, nor have we power
To give the multitude to eat,
But we may bring our barley loaves,
And lay them at the Master's feet.

He needs them not, yet will he deign
His humblest servant's work to bless,
As when the lad's five barley loaves
Fed thousands in the wilderness.

## SAMARITAN STORIES.

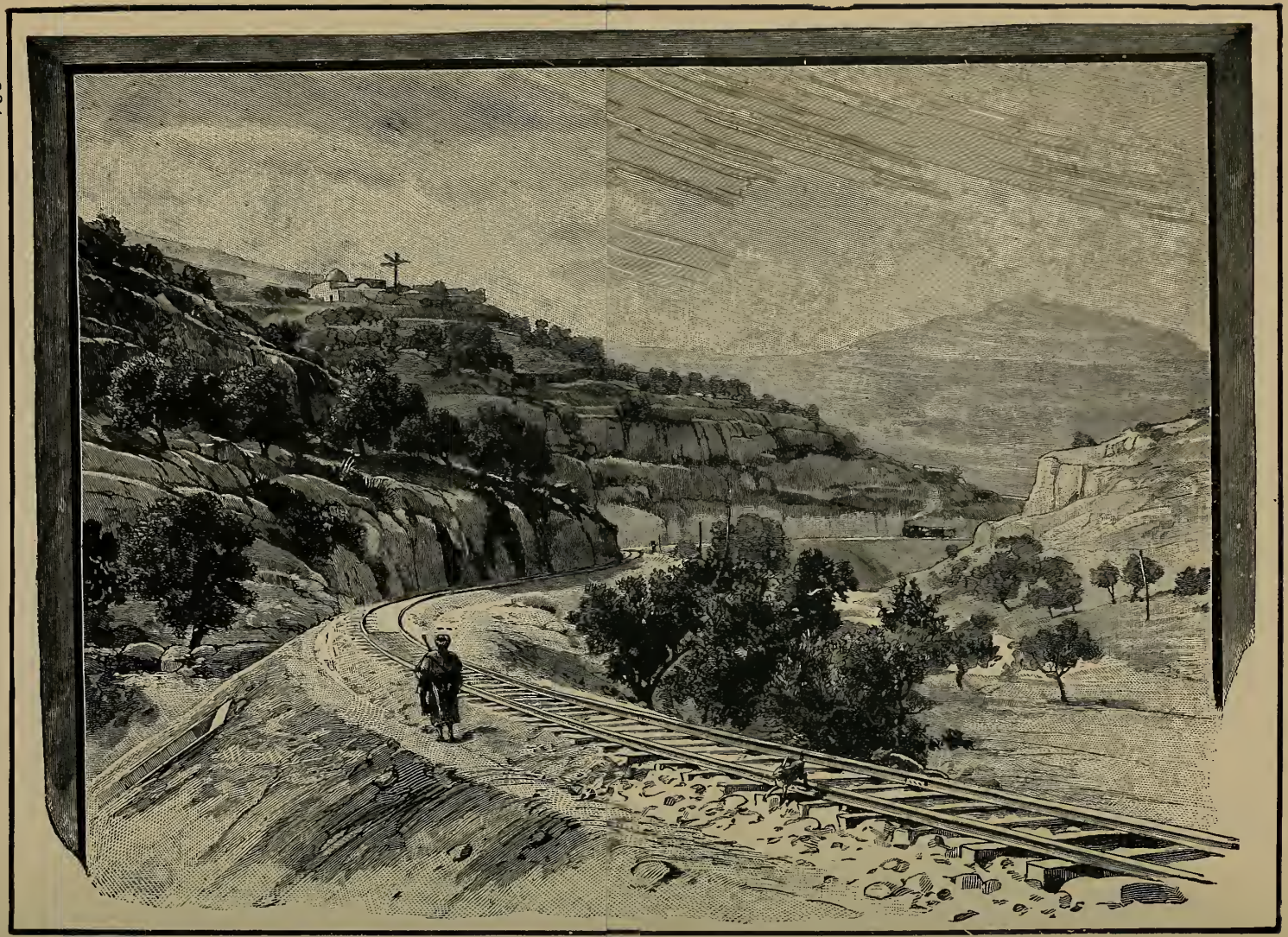
AS Jesus and his disciples went along, they saw ten lepers standing a long way off. Poor men! they did not dare to come near Jesus, but they cried out in the strange voice which lepers have, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Nine of the lepers were Jews, and one was a Samaritan. And Jesus was sorry for them all, and said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests."

When the lepers heard that, they felt sure that Jesus meant to heal them, for lepers did not show themselves to the priests till they were well. So they turned straight round to go to the priests, and lo! as they were going along the road, they suddenly felt that they were strong and well again. When the Samaritan felt in himself that the leprosy had gone away, he turned back, and threw himself down at the feet of Jesus, and thanked him, and thanked God too for all his goodness. But none of the nine Jews came back to thank Jesus.

A few days after that a man came to Jesus, and asked how he could get to heaven. Jesus said that he must love God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself. Then the man said, "Who is my neighbor?" So Jesus told him a story, which I will tell you now, because it was about a Samaritan.

A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho—such a rough road; that is, with great rocky steps leading down, down, down. There are robbers there, and they found the man, and took off all his clothes, and hurt him so badly that he nearly died. Soon a priest passed by, but he took no notice of the poor man; he only crossed over to the other side of the road. Then a servant of the Temple came and looked at him, and crossed over to the other side.

But a Samaritan who was travelling that way came where the poor man was; and he felt very sorry for him, and went to him, and poured oil and wine on the places where the thieves had hurt him, and tied them up carefully; and then he put the man on his own beast, a horse or a



FROM JAFFA TO JERUSALEM BY RAILROAD.

donkey, or a camel, and brought him safely to the inn near by. The Samaritan took care of the poor man that night; and next day, when he had to go away, he gave some money to the man who took care of the inn, and said, "Take care of him, and if you spend any more money I will pay you when I come back."

When Jesus had finished that story he said, "Which now of these three was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?" You can answer that question, I think; and I hope that you will go and do like that Samaritan. While Jesus was travelling along from Capernaum to Jerusalem, the Jews at the Feast of Tabernacles were looking all about the city for him, and asking one another, "Where is he?" Some said, "He is a good man;" but others said, "No, he is not; he tells the people things that are not true."

One day, about the middle of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus was found sitting and teaching quietly in the Temple, just as he always did. And as the Jews listened to his words they were greatly puzzled and said, "How does this man know so much, when no one has taught him?" Then Jesus explained that it was God who had taught him; and he told the Jews that God would teach them too if they wanted to learn.

But Jesus knew that those Jews did not want to learn; he knew that even now they were making plans to take away his life. So he said to them, suddenly, "Why go ye about to kill me?" The Jews were very much ashamed when they found that Jesus knew their thoughts. They did not know what to say, so they were rude, and angry, and said, "Thou hast a devil. Who goeth about to kill thee?"

But some of the people who were standing by began to think, "Perhaps this really is the Christ." And when the priests and the Pharisees knew that, they sent some of the Temple police to take Jesus prisoner. It was now the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. It was the last day that the people would go down to the stream of water near the Temple hill with the priests, singing, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." And they wanted something better than that water, something that they could carry away with them—they wanted living water for their thirsty hearts. And as Jesus saw the crowds, he stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

Are your hearts thirsty, dear children? Do you want the living water—the Holy Spirit which Jesus gives to every one who asks him to.

do so? If so, come unto Jesus, and drink. As the Temple police listened to the beautiful words which the Lord Jesus spoke, they felt, "It is no use, we cannot take that man prisoner." And they came back to the priests and the Pharisees who sent them.

When the priests and Pharisees looked up, and saw that Jesus was not there, they said, "Why have ye not brought him?" And the officers answered, "Never man spake as this man." The priests and Pharisees were disappointed, and said rude and angry things to the police. Then one of the Rabbis, called Nicodemus—the Rabbi who came to Jesus by night—said to the others gently, "Would it not be well to listen to Jesus, and to see what he does, before you find fault with him?" It was all of no good. The priests and Pharisees only turned round now to Nicodemus, and were rude to him too. They did not want to believe in Jesus.

Did Jesus come back the next day to the Temple? Oh yes. He knew that the Jews could do him no harm till God's time had come. Very early in the morning he was there, and the people crowded round him directly they saw him, and he sat down and taught them again. I will tell you just one thing that Jesus told the people that day. He said, "*I am the Light of the world.*"

The Feast of Tabernacles was quite over now. The beautiful illumination in the Court of the Women, which lighted up the whole city, would not be lighted up any more for a year. But Jesus lights up the *hearts* of those who love him, and makes them bright, and happy, and holy; and he is ready to be the Light of every one in the world who will let him. But the Jews would not let Jesus shine into their dark hearts. As he went on talking, they argued with him, were very rude to him, and at last took up stones to throw at him. Then Jesus hid himself, and went quietly away.

We can't be quite sure where Jesus went. Most likely it was to a village called Bethany. Just opposite the Temple hill, Mount Moriah, there was another hill, called the Mount of Olives. Bethany was right over on the other side of the Mount of Olives, and Jesus often walked over the hill to see some friends of his there, one brother and two sisters who lived in the village.

The names of those friends of Jesus were Mary and Martha and Lazarus. Jesus loved them very much, and they loved him. But Mary and Martha showed their love in very different ways. Mary sat as quiet

JESUS AND THE SISTERS OF BETHANY.

and still as possible when Jesus came in, and listened to every word that he said; and Martha wanted so much to make him happy and comfortable that she ran about the whole time doing things for him, instead of listening to the beautiful words he was saying.

One day when Martha saw Mary sitting still listening to Jesus, she felt so vexed that she came and asked Jesus to speak to her and make her come and help. Martha was so much vexed with Mary that she spoke a little crossly even to Jesus. Then Jesus explained gently to Martha that he did not want her and Mary to be busy doing things for him all the time. The grand dinners which kept Martha so busy would soon be forgotten; but the words which Mary was listening to could never be taken away from her.

One day the Pharisees turned him out of the synagogue. He told them they could see things with their eyes, but they could not see that their hearts were full of sin. How could blind people like that look after the poor lost sheep among the Jews?

Then Jesus preached one of the most beautiful little sermons he ever preached at all. I will tell you a bit of it. He said: "I am the door of the sheep; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved. I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold under one Shepherd."

The "other sheep" Jesus spoke about meant the Gentiles, the people who are not Jews. It meant you and me, and it meant all the heathen. He has called us. He is calling the heathen. And many sheep, many quite little lambs, have heard the voice of Jesus, and are following him. Have you heard him calling you? Have you followed him? If not, oh make haste to go after him now.

That beautiful sermon makes me think of a kind of little story which Jesus once told the people who were crowding around him. He said: "What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have

found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth."

But the Jews of Jerusalem did not repent. They could not be sorry for their sins, because they did not think they had any. They did not listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd because they were not his sheep. I do not know what Jesus did next. Perhaps he went to Perea, on the other side of the River Jordan, to preach and to teach. Perhaps he stayed in Bethany. But in two or three months he came to the Temple again for another feast.

But the Jews were not sorry even now; they would not listen to Jesus even now; they behaved worse than ever, and took up stones to

throw at him. This time Jesus went quite away from Jerusalem across the River Jordan to Perea, and he never came back again to Jerusalem till he came back to die.

Jesus came back once to Bethany from Perea. Soon after Jesus had gone away from Bethany his friend Lazarus became very ill. How much Martha and Mary longed for Jesus now! They thought, "If Jesus were here, our brother would not die;" and they sent a messenger to him to say, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick." When Jesus heard that, he said, "This sickness will be for God's glory. It will not end in death." And he stayed on quietly where he was for two days longer. Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go into Judæa again." And they did not

wish him to go, and said, "Lord, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou there again?" Then he told them, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of his sleep." That surprised the disciples. They said, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well." Then Jesus told them plainly that Lazarus was dead.

When those who love Jesus die, their death is called a sleep. That is why Jesus said that Lazarus was sleeping. But Jesus had said a little while before that the sickness would not end in death; and yet now Lazarus was dead. How was that? What did Jesus mean? Ah! very soon you will see. When the disciples found that Jesus really meant to go, they said that they would go too, and die with him. They knew how much the Jews hated Jesus. They knew that they were only waiting for a chance to kill him. But Jesus was never afraid to go anywhere where it was his duty to go; and the disciples loved Jesus, so that made them brave.

It took Jesus quite a day to get to Bethany, and by this time Lazarus had been in the grave for four days. The two sisters were in the house. A number of Jews were with them. They had come over from Jerusalem to sit with Martha and Mary, and to try to comfort them. That is always the plan in that country. Presently somebody came to Martha, and said to her quietly, "Jesus is coming." Directly Martha heard that, she got up, and went out to meet him. And when she saw Jesus, she said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother would not have died; but I know that even now whatever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." Jesus said to her, "Thy brother shall rise again." And Martha said, "I know that he shall rise again at the last day."

And Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" And Martha said, "Yes, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah the Jews are expecting." Then Jesus asked to see Mary, and Martha came back and told her very quietly that Jesus had come; and Mary jumped up quickly and went out. When the Jews saw that, they said, "She is going to her brother's grave to weep there," and they too went after her, crying.

When Mary saw Jesus, she said, as Martha had done, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw how unhappy Mary and the Jews were, he too felt very sad, and said,

"Where have ye laid him?" And they said, "Lord, come and see." And then—Jesus wept. "See how he loved Lazarus," said the Jews; and they wondered that Jesus had let his friend die.

Now they had come to the grave. It was a hole in the side of a rock, and there was a heavy stone over it. Jesus said, "Take ye away the stone;" and they rolled it away. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes, and thanked God that he had heard his prayer and given him back the life of

"LAZARUS, COME FORTH."

Lazarus. And then he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." And the man who had been dead came out of the cave alive. He was all wrapped round with white linen, and could not move very well, because in that country it was the plan to wrap dead bodies up in long white clothes, with sweet-smelling stuff inside. But Jesus told the people who were standing round to unfasten the pieces of linen, and to let Lazarus go home.

So the sickness of Lazarus had not ended in death after all. It was just as Jesus had said, it had been for the glory of God.

One Sabbath day, when Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, he saw a poor woman who was doubled up with rheumatism. You have seen people, perhaps, whose hands are quite drawn out of their proper shape with rheumatism; but this poor woman's whole body was bent by it, so that she could not possibly stand upright. And when Jesus saw her he called her to him and laid his hands on her, and told her that he had made her well, and she was well directly. Then the woman praised God for his goodness and love, and the people of the country were glad, and praised God.

Another Sabbath day came, and a Pharisee asked Jesus to come and eat at his house. While Jesus was there, a poor man came in who was all swollen with an illness called dropsy, and the Pharisees watched Jesus to see whether he would make him well. But they need not have watched. They might have known beforehand that Jesus would be sure to make him well, whether it was the Sabbath or whether it was any other day. And when Jesus had healed the man and sent him away, he turned to the Pharisees, and said, "If any of you had an ox or an ass which had fallen into a pit, would you not pull it out at once on the Sabbath day?" Of course they would, and a man is worth more than an ox or an ass. The Pharisees were ashamed when they saw how foolish they had been, but they were not really sorry.

In that country it was the plan for the Jews to bring their children to the Rabbis to be blessed, and as Jesus was a great Rabbi, I dare say that little children had often been brought to him that he might put his hands upon them and pray. But one day, when the mothers of Perea brought their little ones to Jesus, the disciples found fault with them for coming, and tried to keep them away.

Why was that? Perhaps it was because Jesus was tired, or perhaps it was because the children looked dirty and wretched. In the pictures of Jesus blessing the little ones, the children are made to look plump, pretty, and rosy; but I dare say that they were really poor babies with scarcely anything on, and with very sore or quite blind eyes, and poor thin little girls and boys with dreadful diseases all over them. For mothers in the East do not understand at all how to take care of their children, and, though they love them very dearly, they neglect them very much indeed.

But when Jesus saw what the disciples were doing he was much displeased, and said to them: "*Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.*"

And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. It did not matter to him whether they were clean or dirty, sick or well, fretful or good. He just gathered all those little lambs with his arms, and folded them in his bosom. But I can't help thinking that

CHRIST BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN.

he took up the most wretched ones first, and held them the most closely and the longest. He then blessed and prayed for the children and went away.

This is one of the most touching scenes described in the Gospel story. Christ was fond of the little ones; he would not send them away without his blessing. He knew they would soon grow to be men or women, and the lessons taught them in childhood would never be forgotten. Jesus loves the children now as much as he did when upon earth, and is ready to receive them when they come to him.

# LAST DAYS IN JERUSALEM.

THE people in Jerusalem heard that Christ was coming, and crowds of them poured out to meet him. They carried boughs of palm-trees in their hands, and waved them, and cried Hosanna, just as they always did at the Feast of Tabernacles. Hundreds of years before this God had said that Jesus, the King of the Jews, should come one day to Jerusalem riding on a young ass. And Jesus knew now that the time had come. So he sent two of his disciples to a village a little further on to fetch a young ass and its mother.

There is a quick way to that village, and there is a long, easy way; so Jesus could go round the long way, and meet the crowds, while the disciples went the quick way, and got the ass all ready, and met Jesus on the road. You may be sure that the disciples went as fast as they could. And there, in the village, just where Jesus had told them to look, they found the young ass and its mother. Just as they were untying them, the people they belonged to said, "What are you doing?" But when the disciples said, "The Lord has need of them," they let them go directly.

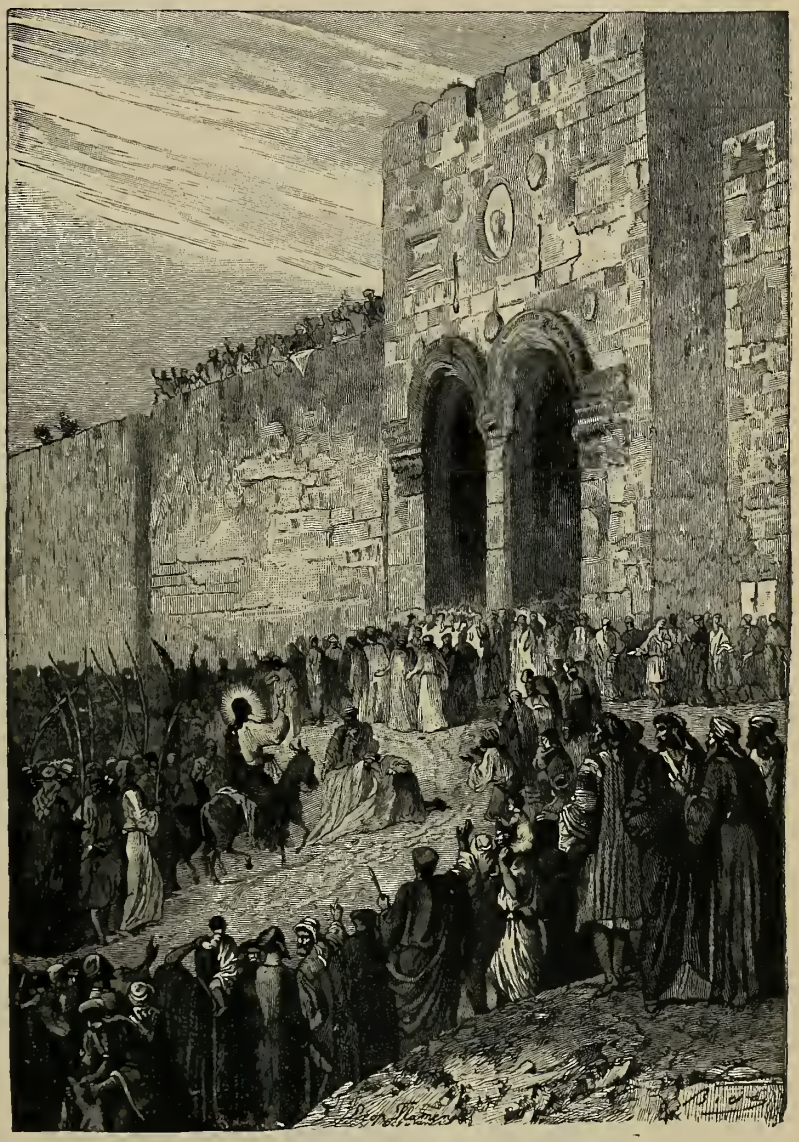
Then the disciples brought the asses to Jesus, and they spread their long, loose outside dresses on the back of the young ass that Jesus might sit upon it. And the people in the crowd took off their long, loose dresses and laid them on the ground that Jesus might ride over them. They do that in Palestine now sometimes. And they cut down branches of trees, and threw them down too on the ground, and they sang a beautiful song: "Hosanna! Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." Why! that was almost exactly the same thing that the angels said when Jesus was born.

As the crowds moved along, they talked about how Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. It was hearing about that that had excited them so much, and had made them come to meet Jesus. Presently Jesus came to a part of the Mount of Olives where he could see the beautiful city of Jerusalem and the wonderful Temple straight before him; and as he looked at them, he wept aloud.

Why did Jesus weep? Was it because the Jews were going to kill him? Yes; but he was not weeping for himself, but for the Jews. He

wept because they loved their sins, and hated their Saviour. He wept because he knew that God would have to punish them. He knew that in but a very few years the Romans would come and fight against Jerusalem, and burn down that beautiful Temple, and kill thousands of the Jews, or carry them away as slaves. Were not these things enough to make the Lord Jesus weep?

"Who is this?" the people in Jerusalem asked, when they saw Jesus and the crowds which went before and followed him. And the crowds told them that he was Jesus, a prophet (that means, you remember, a great preacher) of Nazareth of Galilee.



CHRIST'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

And now Jesus went into the Temple. There, in the Court of the Gentiles, just as when he began his work three years before, Jews were buying and selling and money-changing, and shouting and quarreling, and making a noise. If any poor Gentile had tried to say his prayers there, I am sure he could not have attended to what he was saying. Jesus just looked round at everything and everybody; and then,

as it was getting towards evening, he and his twelve disciples went quietly back to his friends at Bethany.

It was now just four days before the Passover. Next morning Jesus walked with his disciples from Bethany to Jerusalem, and as he went along he began to feel hungry, just as you do if you go out early in the morning.

Now there were a number of fruit-trees growing near Bethany, and anybody was allowed to gather and eat the fruit, just as people can do now in Kashmir. So when Jesus saw a fig-tree covered over with leaves, he went up to it to look for some figs. It was not really quite the right time for figs just yet; but figs used to come first on the fig-trees, and leaves afterwards; so when Jesus saw a fig-tree covered with leaves, he knew there ought properly to be some fruit there too. But, no! that fig-tree was like the Pharisees—it was only pretending. It looked better than the other trees, but there were no figs on it at all. And Jesus said that there never should be any more fruit upon it; and in a very few hours it died. The tree knew no better. Jesus did not want to punish the tree. But he did want to give his disciples a lesson about not pretending to be better than they were, like the Pharisees.

When Jesus got to Jerusalem, he went into the Temple; and there, in the Court of the Gentiles, the people were buying and selling and making a noise, just the same as the evening before. A number of people who did not want to pray at all were walking through the Temple court, because it was a quick way to get from one side of Jerusalem to another. Jesus was not pleased. He said they must not do it any more.

And he sent away the people who were selling too, and those who were buying; and he threw down the tables where money was being changed, and the seats of those who were selling doves; and he said to the people in the court, "My house shall be called of *all* nations a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves."

Jesus wanted the Gentiles to have a quiet place to pray in as well as the Jews, you see; but the Jews only thought of themselves. Jesus thought of every one. The blind and the lame came to him in the Temple, and he made them well; and when the little children in the Temple cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David," he was pleased to hear their song. But the priests were very angry. Why were the priests angry? What did "Hosanna to the Son of David" mean? Why, it

meant, "Save us, Jesus our King." The priests could not bear to hear the children call Jesus their King, and ask him to save them. And Satan is very angry now when he hears a little child say, "Save me, O Jesus, my King." But Jesus is pleased. That night again Jesus went to Bethany. It was now three days before the Passover.

THE WIDOW GIVING HER MITES.

Next day Jesus must have got very, very tired. The priests, and the Pharisees, and the friends of Herod all tried, one after the other, to quarrel with him, or to make him say something wrong. But it was all of no use. Jesus answered all their questions so wisely and so well that at last they did not dare to ask him anything more. But the priests, and the Pharisees, and the friends of Herod could not answer the questions that Jesus asked them. That day Jesus told them exactly what he thought of all their wicked ways and unholy thoughts.

But now I will tell you something which must have pleased Jesus. When people wanted to give money to the Temple, they came up into the Court of the Women. There were thirteen boxes there, each in the shape of a trumpet. Jesus sat for a while by those boxes, and watched the people who were putting in money. Many rich men came, and put in

a great deal, but presently a widow came (a poor woman whose husband was dead), and she only put in two tiny bits of money. Nobody was allowed to put in less than that. And yet, what do you think? Jesus said that that poor widow had put in more than all the rich people, for she had given all the money that she had, but the rich men had only given what they could spare very well.

And another thing must have pleased Jesus which happened just about the same time. Some Gentiles came to the Temple and said to one of the disciples, called Philip, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Philip came and told Andrew about those Gentiles. I dare say he said, "Do you think our Master will have anything to do with Gentiles?" And Andrew would say, "Oh yes! Do you not remember how kind he was to the woman of Samaria, and the woman near Cæsarea, and to the Roman centurion?" Then Philip and Andrew went together and told Jesus.

The next day again Jesus stayed quietly in Bethany; but Peter and John were very busy, for Jesus had sent them to Jerusalem to get ready for the Passover. They had to take a lamb to the Temple to be killed by the priests, and they had to find a house in which to eat the Passover supper. Jesus said to them, "Go to Jerusalem, and when you have come into the city, a man will meet you, carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him into the house that he goes to, and say to the master of the house, 'The Master says, My time is near, I will keep the Passover at thy house. Where is the visitors' room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'" And Jesus told Peter and John that the master of that house would show them a large room up stairs all made nicely ready for them. And everything happened exactly as Jesus had said.

When Peter and John had got the Passover supper quite ready, Jesus came from Bethany with the rest of his disciples, and they all sat

down together at the table; and Jesus told the disciples that he was very glad to eat this Passover with them, because it was the very last time he would eat and drink at all before he died.

But what do you suppose the disciples were thinking about? It seems they had been having another squabble about who should be the greatest, so that, instead of thinking about Jesus at all, their minds were full of unkind thoughts about one another. That made the loving heart

CHRIST WASHING HIS DISCIPLES FEET.

of Jesus sad, and in the middle of supper he got up. What was he going to do?

First he took off his long, loose outside dress; then he wrapt a towl round him; then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the long towel which he had fastened round his waist. That was the work that servants in the East used to do, and Peter could not bear to let Jesus wait upon him. He said, "Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet." But Jesus told Peter that he must let him wash him if he wanted to be his child.

When Jesus had finished washing his disciples' feet he put on his long coat again and sat down. And he told his disciples that he had given them an example, so that they might be kind to one another, and wait upon one another. I think that they must have been ashamed of their quarrelling then.

## THE TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION.

THE evening was fast drawing to a close, but before they parted, Jesus gathered together, as it were, into a few words, the teaching of the last three years. He told his disciples to remember that no one could come to the Father, except through him; that is, by walking in the way he trod, believing the truths he taught, and accepting the life he gave, for he said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." That they must be one with him, as the branch is one with the vine, for without him they could do nothing, and the only way to show they loved him was by keeping his words. Moreover, whatever they asked the Father in his name, he would do.

"I do not call you my servants," said he, "but my friends, for I tell you what will happen to you. As the world has hated me, you must not hope, as my followers, for better treatment. For a little while, you will not see me; but, again, after a little while you *will* see me. I came from the Father, and I go back to the Father; and although this night you will all be scattered from me, I am not alone, for the Father is with me. And now I have told you all this, before it come to pass; but though in the world you will, as I have said, have trouble, you may rejoice in your being one with me, for I have overcome the world."

The little group now made their way into the streets, and through the city gate, which was open, it being Passover night. Was the Master going to Bethany? The disciples began to hope so, for he descended the Temple hill and crossed the valley. Instead, however, of taking the path which led over the Mount of Olives, he entered a garden at its foot, called Gethsemane, or "the oil press."

The Paschal moon filled the heavens with its soft quiet light, but not being yet risen over Olivet, the shadow of the hill fell on the garden, and this, with the shade of the olive-trees, and the quiet seclusion of the spot, made it, now, as always, dear to Christ, as his special chamber of prayer.

Kind and gentle as Jesus had been all the evening, comforting the disciples in their trouble, his own great courage, which had carried him through so many conflicts and temptations, seemed now almost to have left him. Entering the garden with Peter, James, and John, the three who had been nearer him than all the others, a horror of coming woe seemed almost to overpower him, and he longed to be alone with his Father, while thus in sore agony of spirit. Leaving the three disciples, therefore, after begging them to pray for him, he made his way a few steps further on, among the dark trees, and gave way to the feelings of almost despair that oppressed him.

CHRIST IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.

How easily he might have crushed his insolent enemies! How easily called angels to his aid! But then—ah, then, he would not have done his Father's will, and he had come to give all, his very *life*, that he might bring Life to men. So terrible was the agony of the mental conflict, that his sweat fell to the ground in drops of blood, while he earnestly prayed that, if it were possible, he might be spared his awful fate. "Nevertheless," added he, "not my will, but thine be done."

Rising, at last, to seek a little comfort from his friends, he found that instead of praying for him in his trouble, their own grief had so tired them that they had dropped asleep. Rousing Peter, therefore, who had made such a boast of not leaving him, he sadly said, "Could you not watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not fall into temptation. I know your spirit is willing," he added, as though excusing them; "it is the flesh that is weak." Again he went away, and once more falling on his face in his sore trouble of soul, found at last the inner calm

THE TAKING OF CHRIST.

he sought, when he had put away all thought of having any will, but that of the Eternal Father, and had lovingly said, "Not my will but thine be done!"

Again going to the disciples, he found them sleeping, but the struggle was almost over, for he had put himself wholly into the Father's hands. And now an angel came and ministered to him and comforted him. The disciples had lost their last opportunity of serving him, for an armed band, led by Judas, was already approaching the garden. But the conflict was past. Strong in this, his final perfect submission to his Father, our Lord rose, and, joining his disciples, went out to give himself up.

Judas had not been with the party, he was absent, and Jesus knew why. He awoke his disciples and said, "Rise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that doth betray me. And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people." They did not exactly know which was Jesus, and so Judas said he would go up to him and salute him, and then they would know.

How strangely hardened his heart must have been, and how blinded, after Jesus had told him he was about to be betrayed, and that he would be the betrayer, to suppose that our Lord should not see through his hypocritical design, in kissing him only to betray him! And a worse sign he could not have given, for it only served to show his baseness in the strongest light. Had he struck him it would have been very bad, but to kiss him only to show his enemies which was he, was the height of wickedness! Those who now pretend to love Christ, and yet do not faithfully give themselves up to his cause, do but too much resemble Judas: this is like kissing Christ and betraying him.

Moreover, Judas added, "Hail, Master!" that is, peace be to thee, or health and happiness, as we say, "and kissed him." And all this he did from the love of money. The poor disciples showed too, that while Jesus was so ready to die for them, they were then afraid to lose their lives for him; they all "forsook him and fled!"

Peter was always very zealous and forward in danger, and when Christ was taken, he did not quite like to leave him in the hands of his enemies without seeing what they were about to do, so he "followed him afar off unto the High Priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end."

In the meantime the priests and elders tried to get some persons to bear witness that Christ had said something in their hearing that was very wicked, and according to their law deserved death. Now none could say this in truth; so they were obliged to get false witnesses—that is, pay some bad men to say anything they pleased, to make a reason for pronouncing sentence on him. These vile men then declared that they had heard Christ say, that he could destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. Christ had, indeed, said something like such a thing, but he spake only of "the temple of his body;" that is, that when he should be put to death he would "rise again the third day." And he did not say, "I am

able to destroy the temple," but only, "destroy this temple," meaning, as I have just said, his body.

This was, however, too trifling to affect his life; so the High Priest tried if he could get Christ to say something that would suit their purpose better, and adjured him to tell them whether or not he was "the Son of God." "Thou hast said," said Jesus; that is, thou art right—"I am the Son of God." Then the High Priest rent his clothes, declared he had spoken blasphemy, and that there was no further need of witnesses. Had he not been the Son of God, he would, indeed, have spoken blasphemy; but they did not know that he was so, though he had done miracles enough in the land to prove it, and therefore, they now seized the opportunity of putting to death the Lord of Life and Glory.

And now the servants and soldiers spat in his face, struck him, slapped his cheeks, and having blindfolded him, asked him to tell them who did it. This was horribly wicked; and they are as horribly wicked who make sport with the name of Jesus, and use it triflingly or in jest; take care never to sport with sacred things.

Peter was all this while sitting among the servants of the High Priest, when one of the maids espied him out, and accused him of being a disciple; but Peter was afraid of suffering in the same way, and so denied it. He then left his seat and went to the porch or entrance of the High Priest's hall; but there he was again discovered by another maid, and then he swore that he knew nothing of Christ.

After this some more persons charged him with being one of Christ's followers, and they said that his dialect proved he came from the same part of the country. Peter again cursed and swore, probably worse than before, and said he knew nothing of Christ. Those that curse and swear show most plainly that they cannot belong to Christ, as Peter took a most effectual and wicked method to disguise himself.

Jesus had warned him of this, and told him that before the cock should crow twice he would deny him thrice. His words now came to pass; the cock crew—Peter remembered it—his heart was ready to break—he thought how wicked he had been, and, going away, he "wept bitterly." This was a sign that he sincerely repented; but no weeping bitterly can ever wash away the foulness of your sins and mine; *that* can only be done by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ, which has a particular virtue in healing the wounded soul, and taking away its guilt and defilement.

Early in the morning Jesus was brought before the Council at the Temple, where his condemnation was signed. The priests and elders, with the soldiers, then took him to Herod's beautiful palace, in which Pilate was staying, sending in to ask the governor to come outside into the courtyard; for, were they but to enter the house of a heathen, they would be defiled, and unable to enter the Temple on the festival Sabbath. How blind these rulers were, to think that walking into the house of a Roman would hurt them more than the awful sin they were committing!

Not knowing much of the Jewish religion, Pilate did not understand the strange accusation made against the Prisoner, and said they must judge him themselves, according to their law. This the priests refused to do, for they feared his friends would not allow him to be stoned, and that they should be hated were they to order it.

The governor, therefore, called Jesus into his palace, and asked if he were indeed a King. Our Lord admitted that he was; but that his Kingdom was not of this world. "If it were," said he, "my servants would fight to save me from the Jews. I have come to be a witness of the truth, and whoever is of the truth, listens to me."

Pilate knew well that the priests had only given him up from anger, and cared nothing for the truth, so he said half scornfully, "What is truth?" Then, bringing out Jesus to his accusers, he said he found no fault in him. At this they rose up in furious anger. Pilate *must* find him guilty, and in their excitement some of them shouted, "But he tells people not to pay tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is King!"

Turning again to the only one among the madly-excited crowd who was perfectly calm, and whom they were accusing of stirring up tumults, Pilate asked what Jesus had to say to that; but he made no reply. He knew he had taught exactly the opposite—that people were to give to Cæsar what was due to him; but it was of no use to say so, for, as Pilate knew, *truth* was nothing to the priests.

"I cannot say that I find any fault in him," said Pilate, much perplexed.

"But you must not let him go," said the elders; "why, he is always trying to unsettle the people; he began to gather multitudes together in Galilee, and from there to Judæa, large crowds have hung on his words." "Began in Galilee," repeated Pilate; "then is he a Galilæan?" "Certainly," replied the priests, "He comes from Nazareth."

"Oh, then," said Pilate, much pleased at thus getting out of his difficulty, "it is not for me to judge him at all. Herod Antipas, king of Galilee, is just now in Jerusalem, take your Prisoner to him."

CHRIST BEFORE PILATE.

How weary our Lord must have been, after his dreadful night, at being thus hurried from place to place; but his accusers knew no mercy.

King Herod, he who had caused John the Baptist to be beheaded, was glad to see one of whom he had heard so much, and hoped our Lord would perform a miracle before him; but in this he was disappointed, for Christ worked miracles to relieve suffering, not to glorify himself. The priests and elders felt that precious time was slipping by, for they wished him condemned and executed before the Sabbath began, at sunset, though the law forbade them to put any one to death on the day of his condemnation. They hastened, therefore, to accuse him, as before Pilate, of making himself a King; on which Herod and his soldiers began

MINISTERING TO CHRIST'S AGONY

JUDAS BETRAYING CHRIST WITH A KISS

to laugh at Jesus, and to mock him, dressing him up in grand robes; and, thus arrayed, he was sent back to Pilate.

As the governor again took his seat in the court of judgment, before the palace, a message was brought him from his wife, telling him to have nothing to do with condemning this good man, as she had had a dream about him, which had much disturbed her. Turning, therefore, to the priests, he told them it was impossible to pass sentence of death on one who had done no wrong. To please them, however, he would order him to be scourged; a most cruel punishment, for the whips often had pieces of lead or sharp bits of bone fastened in them, and these tore the flesh dreadfully; "but after that," said he, "Jesus of Nazareth must be set at liberty. As it is the custom, too, to release a prisoner at the Passover, shall that prisoner be he?"

"No!" cried the crowd, urged on by the priests; "release Barabbas." This Barabbas was the son of a rabbi, a robber and murderer, who had often tried to raise a revolt. "What shall I do with your king, then?" "We have no king but Cæsar," shouted these hypocrites, for they really hated the Roman emperor. "We have no king but Cæsar, and if you let this man go, you are not Cæsar's friend." Alarmed at the rising excitement and fury of the mob, Pilate tried to reason with them, but in vain. His words were drowned in their shrieks of "Crucify him! Crucify him! To the cross with him!"

Weak, cowardly Pilate felt he must quell the disturbance, at all costs. The priests evidently meant to have the life of their prisoner, and, calling for water to wash his hands, he said, "Let this water, washing all stains from my hands, be a sign to you that my conscience is clear from all share in this innocent man's blood. If you *must* have a victim for your rage, take him; but if wrong be done, let the blame be on your own heads, not on mine."

Thus did Pilate, knowing our Lord to be innocent, meanly give him up to death, although he might easily have dispersed this mob with his soldiers; but he feared to offend the Jews, lest they should complain to the emperor, and cause him to lose his place. "We will gladly take all the blame, if there be any," cried the people. "We and our children will answer for his blood." When the soldiers had cruelly scourged Jesus, they pressed a crown of sharp thorns on his brow, and putting a reed in his hand, as if this were the right sceptre for such a king.

Our Lord's strength must by this time have been nearly spent, for people often died after being scourged; and Pilate tried, for the last time, to move the crowd to pity, by bringing him out to them, and letting them see him—now scarcely able to walk, from ill-treatment and grief. "Behold the man! Behold your king!" said he. But pity found no place in their hard hearts, and their only reply was to rend the air with shouts of "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

The chief priests and elders, as you read in the last chapter, had at length got their way, for Christ was condemned to die the most cruel of deaths. Although he would suffer at the hands of Roman soldiers, the sin was theirs, all the same, for had they not forced the governor, by threats, to take his life? But there was one among the crowd, who did not join in the murderous cries, whose heart sank within him at the awful words shouted on every hand. It was the betrayer.

The miserable man had gone with the crowd, backwards and forwards, from one court to another, and now, finding his Master was really to die, after having already suffered such terrible agony, he was overpowered with remorse and grief. No longer able to endure the thought of the thirty pieces of silver he had received, as the price of his blood, he made his way to the Temple, whither the priests had already gone, for the morning sacrifice, and flinging the money on the ground before them, cried in an agony, "What shall I do! I have betrayed an innocent man!"

"That," they said coldly, "is your affair, and has nothing to do with us." The poor wretch left their presence in despair. He could not forgive himself his base deed, and in his self-accusing madness went out and hanged himself. The priests, meanwhile, not daring to put the money into the Temple treasury, decided to buy a field with it, to be used for burying strangers.

It was now about nine o'clock. The men having brought out the upper part of the cross, laid it on our Lord's shoulders, and he set forth on the terrible, though short, journey, to the outside of the city, for no one could be put to death within it. Jesus was, however, so exhausted by the cruel treatment he had received, that he was only able to go very slowly along the hilly streets, carrying such a weight. Finding, soon, that it was really more than he could possibly bear, the soldiers laid hold of a strong man passing by, a native of Cyrene, in the north of Africa, and made him carry it.

JUDAS WENT OUT AND HANGED HIMSELF.

But our Lord was not surrounded by enemies only, for the news of his arrest and trial had, by this time, spread through the city, and though too late to save him, his friends among the Galilæans would not allow him to go to his death unattended. The women, too, who had often supplied his simple wants, pressed forward, bewailing and lamenting his terrible sufferings. Even at such a moment Jesus could think of others, and turning, told them not to weep for him, but for themselves and their children, for the misery that would come upon them, when the Romans should turn

CHRIST LEAVING FOR GOLGOTHA.

upon their nation, and destroy their city. Then they would cry to the rocks to fall on them, and the hills to cover them, for their conquerors would have no mercy.

Two thieves who had been condemned to die, were led out to be crucified with our Lord. At last they all reached a place named Golgotha, which means a skull, so called because some hollows in a hill-side near, gave it that appearance. The Latin name for Golgotha is Calvary. The highway to Jerusalem passed close to this spot, and as many people were coming along it, into the city, these, with the crowds who had now come out, must, together, have made a very large concourse of people.

Having reached Calvary, the soldiers, according to custom, offered a drink to the prisoners, which would cause them to feel less pain. But Jesus refused to take it, for fear it should also stupefy his mind. Having taken off their clothes, the soldiers placed Jesus and the thieves on the three crosses, as they lay on the ground, and performed the most cruel part of their task, that of nailing them to the wood, through their hands and feet. The knees were bent till the sole of the foot rested on the beam, and was thus nailed.

Perhaps it was at this awful moment that the first of our Saviour's dying words fell from his lips. "Father," he prayed, "forgive them, for they know not what they do." With a hideous jolt the crosses were then put into the holes prepared for them; the accusation of each sufferer, which, written on a board, had been carried before him, being first fastened at the top. Strange to say, the crime laid to the charge of Jesus was that he was "King of the Jews." And this was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, that all might be able to read it.

The Roman soldiers, having now only to wait till the end came, sat down, and began to divide the clothes among them. They tore the abba, or outward garment of Jesus, into several parts; but as his inner garment was woven in one piece, and would be of no use, unless whole, one of them got out some dice, and he who threw the highest number, took the garment. How wonderful it seems that, many centuries before, the Psalms, speaking of our Lord, had said, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture!"

Having offered the usual sacrifice, the chief priests came out from the city, that they might glory over their victim. But when they saw the words, "The King of the Jews," on his cross, they were much displeased, and went to Pilate, telling him he ought to have written that *he said* he was King of the Jews. Pilate, however, weary of their demands, and perhaps angry with himself for having given in to them at all, answered shortly, "What I have written, I have written."

As the morning wore on, the heat of the sun beating down on the forms of the sufferers, must have been terrible; but the Jews had no mercy, and could even find it in their hearts to jeer at Christ, as he hung there, saying that if he could build the Temple in three days, he had better show his power by coming down from the cross, that they might believe that he was God's Son; while even the priests and elders were not

above making the sneering remark, that though he had saved others, he could not save himself.

To all this our Lord made no reply. He knew that, in saving others, he *could* not save himself, for he had come to earth, had lived, and now died, to take away the sin of the world. Had he failed at the last, he would not have saved mankind. The thieves, meanwhile had not been so uncomplaining as our Lord; and at last one of them shouted, that if he were the Christ, why did he not use his power in saving the lives of all three. But the other, touched by the wondrous patience of him who hung so near him, silenced his companion, saying that they were both suffering justly; "but this man," said he, "has done nothing amiss."

And then the thought dawned on his soul that, perhaps, Jesus was indeed a King, and if so, he must have a Kingdom somewhere. It certainly did not seem to be here; was it possible that it lay beyond death? Or had he heard him speak of his returning, after his death, to raise the dead, and reign as the Messiah-Prince? For he may have been one of the crowd round our Lord when he spoke in this way. "Jesus," said he, "remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom."

The bystanders heard the words, and those who loved our Lord listened breathlessly for the answer. Would he now tell them where his kingdom was, and how they might some day reach him? "Verily," said Jesus, faintly, turning his eyes towards the thief, "to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." It was enough. His kingdom was beyond the grave, and they now knew that, to join him, they also must pass through the gates of death. The thief, too, said no more, being quite content with the promise given him.

Not far from the cross stood the mother of Jesus, and some of his dearest friends among whom was John. Christ saw their grief, and thinking what a blank his death would make for them both, told Mary that John must be her son now, while to the beloved disciple he gave, as a sacred trust, the care of her, who was dearest to him on earth. So, from that hour Mary was an honored guest, a second mother, in the home of John.

The heat had been terrible, but now, as noon was approaching, a heavy darkness gradually came on; the wind was hushed, the birds ceased to twitter. It was as though all nature stood still, and even the sun veiled his face at the dreadful work that was being done. As the awful

hours rolled by, our Lord's sufferings increasing every moment, a horror seemed to overcome him, and he cried in an agonized voice, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He used the Hebrew dialect, which he had spoken as a boy in Nazareth. Some of those who stood by did not understand it, and thought the words sounded as though he were calling on Elijah. But one of them, seeing how much he was suffering from thirst, filled a sponge with some of the soldiers' drink—sour wine and water—and putting it on a stick, taken from a plant near, held it to our Lord's lips.

The horror that had fallen upon him now passed away. He knew the end was approaching, and presently, with a triumphant voice, cried, "It is finished;" then, softly, as though speaking to one very near, he added, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and with a great cry that startled all who heard it, he bowed his head, and was gone.

Pale with terror, men and women looked at each other in the dim light; for the earth was trembling beneath their feet, the rocks around seemed to reel; and as the gloom slowly lifted, forms were seen to leave the cave-tombs in the hill-sides, and stealing quietly past, to vanish within the city, where, we are told, they "were seen of many." Even the Roman officer in charge of the soldiers was alarmed at what was taking place, and cried, "Truly this *was* the Son of God."

The crowd, meanwhile, turned, and in great confusion hastened from the spot. Their alarm was, however, in no way lessened, when they heard that at the very moment when Jesus died, and the ground was shaking, an invisible hand had torn the great curtain, which separated the Holy of Holies from the priest's court, into two pieces; thus laying open to view the sacred chamber, that was only entered once a year by the High Priest.

Did this mean that the Eternal Spirit would cease to own, as his dwelling-place, the temple of which the murderers of his Son were the servants? Or was it that the death of Jesus for evermore opened the way to God, with no curtain, no priest, between him and the soul who earnestly seeks him? Perhaps both, for it is certain that the Holy God cannot be served acceptably by hypocrites—people who pretend to be what they are not; and it is also true that, through the death of our Lord, the "Kingdom of Heaven is opened to all believers."

The Sabbath was now fast approaching, and the Jews, anxious that the city should not be defiled on that day by the men just crucified,

hanging on the cross during its sacred hours, dying or dead, went to Pilate, asking if they might be killed at once. The governor, therefore, gave orders that their legs should be broken—a hideous means used for speedily killing, by the shock of the blows, those who were long in dying on the cross. But when the soldiers had thus made an end of the thieves, they saw that our Lord was already dead, and did not break his legs. One of them in passing, however, thrust a spear into his side, from which blood and water flowed, showing that the cavity of the heart had been pierced; a wound which, of itself, would have been fatal, had he been still alive.

THE WOMEN AT THE TOMB

It was the custom to throw the bodies of those who had been put to death on the constantly burning fires in the valley of Hinnom, which consumed the offal of the sacrifices; but some of the friends of Jesus could not bear that his dear form should be so dishonored. They dared not, however, take the body without permission; but a friend, whom they might little have expected to be so loyal to the

"CHRIST HAS RISEN"

DORCAS GIVING ALMS

dead Saviour, came forward in the difficulty. One of the Jewish elders, named Joseph, a man of Arimathea, noted as owning a large garden close to Jerusalem, had, like Nicodemus, believed that Jesus of Nazareth was a great Prophet, if not the Messiah. Though not brave enough, before, to own him publicly, neither had voted for his death, with the rest of the Council; but this had not saved him, there being so many against them.

Now that he had been so cruelly and wickedly put to death, however, they threw away their fear, and were not ashamed to confess their love for him. Hence it was that Joseph of Arimathea, though a Jewish elder, now entered the palace of Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. The request was unusual, but being made by one in so high a position, the governor thought well not to refuse it. Perhaps, too, his conscience made him feel how wrongly he had acted in condemning our Lord to death, and he may have hoped, in some way, to make up for it, by allowing him honorable burial. So, after asking of the centurion, whether Jesus were actually dead already, and hearing that he had indeed passed away, he gave the elder permission to do as he wished with the remains.

Joseph now immediately bought a fine linen cloth, and, being joined by Nicodemus, who, with his servants, was bringing one hundred pounds weight of spices, to embalm the body, returned to the cross, near which the women were waiting. Taking our Lord carefully down from the dreadful instrument of death, these loving friends washed the stains from the wounds, and then wrapped the body in the linen cloth, putting withit the valuable spices given by Nicodemus. This done, they carried their precious burden to the sepulchre in Joseph's garden, that had been made for himself, and laid it reverently in it.

Meanwhile, the Jewish priests had not forgotten that Jesus had said, how, after three days, he should rise again. So, fearing that perhaps his disciples might come by night, and, after stealing his body, declare he had really risen from the dead—a result which would give his name more power among the people than ever—they resolved to prevent this by getting Pilate to set a guard of soldiers before the tomb.

Having, therefore, got leave from Pilate to make it as secure as possible, they passed a cord across the stone, and sealed it to the rock at each side, with clay, so that no one could enter without its being known; and saw that the guard was duly stationed close by.

And thus the Sabbath quietly passed away in Joseph's garden. But

before the dawn of the third morning, the guard were startled by a sudden earthquake, amidst which an angel, in dazzling white garments, descended from heaven, and having rolled away the stone, the Lord came forth from the tomb, victorious over death and the grave.

The soldiers fled in terror. But they had scarcely left the garden, when it was entered by two of the women, coming to finish the task of embalming the body, so hurriedly performed on Friday. They did not seem to have known that the stone was sealed to prevent its removal, but they wondered, as they went on, who could be got to roll it away, for it was very heavy. When they reached the spot, however, they found that it was, already, rolled away.

In great surprise they entered the cave, when, in the dim light of the early dawn, they perceived first one, and then another, human form, as if of young men, both arrayed in white robes. Speechless with alarm, they could only notice that the stony hollow in which the body of their Lord had lain, was empty. "Be not amazed," said one of the angels, "for I know that ye seek Jesus, who has been crucified; he is not here, for he is risen; behold the place where they laid him."

The elders were at once assembled to consult how best they could hush up this story, and decided that they would bribe the soldiers to say that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus while they were asleep, though they knew that Roman soldiers dared not sleep on their watch. But the elders promised to keep Pilate from harming them, if he should hear of it. Thus won over, the soldiers did as they were told, scarcely thinking, perhaps, how very foolish the whole story was; for, if they had been asleep, how could they have seen the disciples fetch the body away? And if they did see them, why had they not stopped them?

On the afternoon of this ever-memorable day, two of the followers of Jesus, one of whom was named Cleopas, left Jerusalem for a village called Emmaus, about seven miles distant. Their hearts were very sad, for they had firmly believed that Jesus would be the Saviour of Israel, and now that he was taken from them, all hope seemed lost. Passover week had no longer any attraction for them, and they felt that the quiet of their country home would better suit their sad spirits. Presently, a companion joined them, and seeing how grave they looked, asked what they were talking about.

"Is it possible," said Cleopas, "that you can be staying in Jerusalem

and do not know the things that have happened since Friday?" "What things?" said the stranger.

"Why, the things about Jesus of Nazareth," replied they, "that great Prophet, mighty in word and deed. Have you not heard how the chief priests and elders took him, and crucified him, three days ago? But the great wonder is, that this morning, when some of the women of our company went to his tomb, they found him no longer there; but angels

WHILE THEY COMMUNED TOGETHER JESUS HIMSELF DREW NEAR.

were sitting by the place where he had lain. Soon after some of his disciples went, and found that the women had spoken the truth; but they did not see the Master anywhere. It is very sad, for we had so firmly believed him to be the Messiah."

"If you did you were right," said the stranger, "for was it not foretold ages ago that the Christ should suffer this very death, and should then enter into his glory? All this was prophesied by holy men of old." He then went on to explain the Scriptures to them so clearly that their

hearts were quite comforted; for they now saw that every word written of the Messiah, long before, had come true in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Towards dusk they entered the village of Emmaus, and the disciples begged their new friend to come in and lodge with them; and, though he seemed as if he had prepared to have gone farther, he accepted the invitation to rest with them, and share in their simple evening meal. But now, when they were at table, the guest took up one of the small loaves and, having given thanks, broke it, and passed it to the two disciples. The familiar words of blessing, and the well-known gesture in handing the bread, instantly opened their eyes, and made them sure that the companion who had walked so many miles with them, was none other than the Lord himself. But at this very moment, he vanished from their sight.

The disciples had not forgotten that they had been told by the angels to return to Galilee, where our Lord would come to them. They, therefore, went back to their own district in the north, and resumed their old occupation of fishing on the lake. One night, however, having caught nothing, and being wearied with the fruitless toil, they were making for the land at break of day, when they perceived some One standing on the beach. It was Jesus; but they did not at first know him: some change, peculiar, perhaps, to his risen body, making instant recognition difficult. But he soon revealed himself.

"Children," said he, "have you anything to eat?" They answered, "No." "If you cast the net on the right side of the boat," he said, "you will find something;" and when they swept their net round, lo! it enclosed such a number of fish, that it was like to break. "It is the Lord," whispered John to Peter, "it must be;" and the next instant Simon, always lovingly eager, leaped into the water, and swam to the shore to greet him, while the others slowly brought in the boat, dragging the heavy net after them.

Several times after this our Lord appeared to his loved ones; once, to as many as five hundred of those who had formerly listened to him. His last commands were, that the disciples, or apostles, as they were called, should go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and that when thus admitted to his Church, they were to be taught to do all the things he had urged on his followers, as the only way of really inheriting his kingdom. The disciples who had, for so long, listened to his divine

teaching, and witnessed his perfect life, could not fail to know what these things were.

And you too, children, if you have carefully listened to the story, which has now come to an end, understand, I am sure, that to belong to Christ means to be like Christ; that if you wish to show that you love him, you must do as he said. And thus, conquering self-will, bad temper, and all that is unlovely, and becoming daily more unselfish and good, you will grow more and more like him, and be, as he said of the disciples, "one with him, as the branch is one with the vine." And then, trusting in the mercy of God and the forgiveness of sins for our Saviour's sake; having spent a life in his service here, you will one day meet him in his heavenly kingdom; for he said, "Where I am, there shall my servants be."

CHRIST'S ASCENSION.

The last we hear of our Lord's life on earth, was, that once more ascending the Mount of Olives with his dear ones, he raised his hands in blessing, and so was parted from them, and carried up to heaven. As the group still looked upward, two shining ones appeared beside them, and

asked why they were gazing into heaven, telling them that Jesus who had just left them, would, one day, come again in the same manner as they had seen him go.

So the disciples went down the slope of Olivet, henceforth to be sacred ground to all who love the Master, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; for they knew he was only gone for a little while, and would soon come again to take them to himself. And, indeed, they scarcely felt they had lost him, even for a time; for his touch yet lingered in their hands, his love filled their hearts, and his last words were still sounding in their ears, "*Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*"

"Farewell in hope, and love,
In faith and peace, and prayer;
Till he, whose home is ours above,
Unite us there."

# THE STORY OF THE APOSTLES.

AFTER Jesus had ascended into heaven, the disciples all returned to Jerusalem, to wait there for "the promise of the Father," as Jesus had told them. They used to meet together in an upper room, with Mary the mother of Jesus, and the other women, and many more who believed; and they spent their time in prayer and praise.

One day, when about a hundred and twenty of this happy company were gathered together, Peter stood up and spoke to them. He reminded them, that one of the twelve apostles was parted from them for ever—the wicked Judas; and then he said, "Let us now choose from among the disciples another man to take the place of Judas, and to be witness with us of the resurrection of Jesus." The disciples were all willing to do this; and they soon chose out two men, Joseph called Barsabas, and Matthias. But they would not themselves determine which of these two should be the apostle. They prayed to God, and asked him to choose for them. They said, "thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all, show which of these two Thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship." Then they cast lots; and God made the lot fall upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the twelve apostles.

It was very right of the apostles to ask God to direct them in what

they did. This is what we should always do, when we have any business or duty to perform. We are so ignorant, that we know not of ourselves what to do, nor how to do it aright; but if we ask God, he will give us holy wisdom to teach and direct us. St. James says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

Ten days after the ascension, was the feast of Pentecost. God commanded the Israelites to keep it, when he gave them the land of Canaan, so many years ago. It was kept in remembrance of the law being given on Mount Sinai, fifty days after the children of Israel came out of Egypt. It was called, too, the feast of weeks, because it was seven weeks after the Passover.

A great many Jews were now gathered together at Jerusalem, to keep the feast of Pentecost. And many people of other nations were there too. These were Gentiles who had learnt to believe in the God of Israel, and to obey his laws. They were called proselytes. All these people assembled in one place, on the day of the feast. As they were sitting together, they suddenly heard a sound from heaven, like a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house in which they were. And there appeared to them tongues of fire, which came and rested upon every one of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and were enabled, by his power, to speak with "other tongues," in new languages which they had never heard before.

How very wonderful this was! Jesus was now fulfilling his promise; he was sending to them that Spirit whom he had told them before he would send. We know how hard it is to learn a new language. We study it, perhaps, many months or years before we quite understand it, and can speak it. But the disciples, at the feast of Pentecost, had no need to learn the different languages which they then began to speak. In one moment, they knew them perfectly. And why was this? Why did God give such wonderful power to his disciples at that time? Because God wished his gospel to be then made known in many parts of the world, and to nations who had never heard it before. Many people from those nations were in Jerusalem at this very time; but they all spoke languages quite different from the language which the disciples spoke. So God sent the Holy Ghost to give the disciples this miraculous power of speaking different tongues, that they might be able to make known at once, to all the strangers in Jerusalem, "the wonderful works of God."

All those people who came from other countries and heard the disciples speak in their own languages, were very much surprised. They said, "How is this? Are not these men Galileans? How is it they can speak to us in our own tongues?" But the Jews who did not understand the different languages spoken by the apostles, mocked, and said, "These men are full of new wine." But Peter stood up in the midst, and said, "Ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, these wonderful things, which you now hear and see, are only the fulfilment of what God's prophet Joel foretold many years ago. He said that God would, in the last days, pour out his Spirit upon his servants, and teach them to prophesy. And so it is. And now hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth came among you, and worked miracles, as you know. He was taken by wicked men, and crucified, and slain. But God raised him up; and we are witnesses of his resurrection, and say to you, that he is the Son of God, the true Messiah. And now he is ascended up to heaven; and it is he who has sent the Holy Ghost upon us, and given us this wonderful power of speaking which you have heard to-day."

Were the people willing to attend to Peter, and to believe what he said? Yes; they were so much struck with his words, that they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter answered, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Then those who believed were baptized, as Christ had commanded. They were about three thousand.

God is not now pleased to give his people that wonderful power of speaking different tongues, and of working miracles, which he gave to the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Those gifts were very useful and necessary at that time, to enable the disciples to preach the gospel to many nations at once, and to make the people believe that what they preached was really true. But this is not so necessary now; for the Bible is printed in almost every language in the world, and people may read it for themselves; and many missionaries go out to teach it. But God does still give the Holy Spirit to all who ask him, to renew and sanctify their hearts, to teach and comfort them, and to make them meet for heaven. Let us pray, then, for this good gift, and say, "Lord, for Christ's sake, give us the Holy Spirit."

One day, Peter and John went to the temple to pray. A poor lame

man lay at the Beautiful Gate of the temple begging. He had been lame all his life, and could do nothing for himself; so every day he was carried to the gate, and there he lay, asking money from those who went into the temple. When he saw Peter and John, he began to beg something from them; but they were poor men, and had no money to give. What did they do? Did they pass on, and take no notice of the poor lame man? No; Peter and John had learned from their Master, Jesus Christ, to be kind and pitiful, and to go about, as he did, "doing good."

So they spoke to the beggar, and said, "Look on us." The poor man did so directly, hoping to receive some money from them. But Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, give I thee; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Then Peter took him by the right hand, and lifted him up; and immediately his feet became strong, and he stood up, and walked, and went into the temple with Peter and John, leaping and praising God.

All the people who saw this were very much astonished, and they ran to the disciples, greatly wondering. Then Peter said, "Why do you wonder at this? Do you think that it is our power which has cured this lame man? No, it is not our power; it is the power of Jesus which has cured him; that same Jesus whom you denied and crucified. God raised him from the dead; we are witnesses of this; and his name, through faith in his name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. And now repent, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; for God sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

As Peter was speaking, the priests, and the ruler of the temple, and the Sadducees came to them. These wicked men would not believe themselves, and they wished to prevent the people from believing, if they could. So they laid hold of the two disciples, and shut them up in prison. But God blessed what Peter had said; and many more of the people believed.

The next day, the rulers, and scribes, and priests, all came together; and they brought out Peter and John, and made them stand before them, and asked, "Tell us now, by what power have you cured this lame man?" Then Peter, being full of the Holy Ghost, spoke boldly, and said, "It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, that the man has been made whole; that same Jesus whom God raised from the dead; and we tell you plainly that there is salvation only in him; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, by which we can be saved." Then

the priests and rulers wondered very much at the boldness of Peter and John; for they saw that they were ignorant and unlearned men; and "they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

The priests and rulers wanted very much to punish Peter and John; but they could not at that time; for the man who had been healed was standing by, and all the people saw him, and believed in the miracle, and even the wicked priests themselves could not deny it; so they called the disciples again, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach, in the name of Jesus, and then let them go. And did the disciples promise to obey the command? No; they would make no such promise. They said, "It is not right to attend to you more than to God. We must speak the things which we have seen and heard." Then their enemies threatened to punish them if they did so; but the disciples put their trust in God, and asked him to give them strength to preach the gospel without fear. And God heard their prayer, and filled them with holy boldness, and blessed their words to very many of the people.

We should learn, from these apostles, the duty of holy boldness for the sake of Christ. We are commanded in the Bible to be subject to "the higher powers," and this command we must remember and obey. But then, it may sometimes happen that earthly rulers order things which are contrary to God's word; just as those priests and rulers did of whom we have been reading; and just as, you remember, king Darius did, when he commanded the people not to pray for thirty days. And what would it be our duty to do then? We must, as the apostles did, and as Daniel did, obey God rather than man. But when we do this, we must do it in a spirit of love, and gentleness, and humility; because we wish to obey God, not because we wish to resist the lawful authority of man. And we must never forget to love even our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and to pray for them who despitefully use us, and persecute us.

The apostles now went about preaching the gospel, and healing the sick, in the name and by the power of Jesus. When their enemies saw that they had not attended to the command given them, they became very angry again, and laid hold of the apostles, and put them into prison. But these wicked men were not able to hurt the apostles at that time; for God sent an angel by night to open the prison door, and bring out his servants. And then God commanded them, by his angel, to go into the temple, and preach the gospel again to the people there.

The next morning, the priests, not knowing what was done, sent to the prison to bring out the apostles. The messengers soon returned in great wonder, and said, "We found the prison safely shut, and the keepers standing before the doors; but when we went in, we saw no man. The prisoners were gone." Then the priests began to wonder how this could be. But soon some one came in, and said, "We have seen these men whom ye put in prison. They are now standing quietly in the temple, teaching the people." Then the ruler of the temple, and the officers, went and brought out the apostles.

When they came in, the priest spoke very harshly to them, and said, "Did we not command you to teach no more in the name of Jesus? yet ye have disobeyed our command, and preached to all the people in Jerusalem." Then the apostles answered, "We ought to obey God more than man. God raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged upon the cross. He raised him to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins. And we are his witnesses; for we have seen all these things, and we must tell them to the people, because God has commanded us so to do." Then those that heard what the apostles said, grew very angry, and wished to kill them. But there was a Pharisee in the council, named Gamaliel, a learned man, who was honored very much among the people.

Gamaliel hated the apostles, and the gospel they preached, as much as the priests and Sadducees did; but he was wiser and calmer than they. So he commanded that the apostles should be put out for a little time, and then he said, "Ye men of Israel, take care what you do to these men. I advise you to be quiet, and to let them alone. If what they preach be false, it will soon come to nothing; and then we need not trouble ourselves about it. But if it be true, if it be of God, it must prosper, and we cannot overthrow it. If we try to do so, we shall only be found to fight against God." All the council were pleased with what Gamaliel said. So they called back the apostles, and beat them, and commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then let them go.

The apostles bore this cruelty with patience; for they remembered the holy lessons which Jesus had given them about loving their enemies; and his example too, when he suffered so meekly before Pilate and Herod. They even rejoiced that they were allowed to suffer shame for their Saviour's sake. So they went away; and taught and preached Jesus Christ daily, in

the temple, and from house to house. This is another example for us of holy boldness, and patience, and diligence in doing God's work. We should imitate the apostles, as far as we can, in all these Christian graces, and be thankful that we live in a time when people may hear and speak of Jesus without fear of persecution such as these holy men had to endure.

In those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, the apostles had much to do, not only in preaching the gospel, but in other things also. At last they found all this work too much for them; they had not time and strength for it. So they called the disciples, and told them to choose from among themselves seven wise and holy men, who might help them in small things; and then the apostles said, "We will give ourselves to prayer, and the ministry of the word." This saying pleased all the disciples; they were willing to help the apostles, and thus to give them more time for prayer and preaching; so they chose out seven faithful and holy men.

The names of these men were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas. Then they brought them to the apostles, who prayed, and laid their hands upon them, and set them apart for the service of God. These seven men were called deacons. Their business was to attend particularly to the poor widows; and also to collect money, and distribute it to those who were in need.

God still blessed his word more and more; and a great number, even of the priests, "became obedient to the faith." At last, some other enemies began to trouble the servants of God. Whenever God's people are busy in making known the gospel, Satan is busy too among *his* servants, stirring them up to resist the truth, and fight against it; and so it was now.

These wicked men were very angry with Stephen, one of the seven deacons, for he was full of faith and power, and did great wonders and miracles among the people. So they falsely accused him of speaking against Moses and against God; and then they caught him, and brought him before the council, and said, "We have heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered to us."

All this time Stephen stood calmly before his enemies. He looked so holy and so gentle, that those who gazed at him saw his face "as it had been the face of an angel."

At last the high priest spoke to Stephen, and asked, "Are these things so?" Then Stephen began to defend himself, but he did this very wisely and gently. First, he reminded his enemies of their own past history. He told them of Abraham,—of God's command to him to go into the land of Canaan, and of Abraham's faith and obedience. Then he spoke of the sufferings of the people of Israel in Egypt, for four hundred years, as God had said, and of their deliverance by Moses. He reminded them of all the wonders God did for his people in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, by the hand of Moses.

Stephen was accused of speaking against Moses; but he showed, in his defence, that this accusation was untrue, and that he loved and honored him very much as God's faithful servant. Then Stephen told them that Moses himself had prophesied of Christ, of that Saviour whom they rejected. The prophecy was this: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." This prophet was the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Then Stephen spoke of the disobedience of the Israelites, and of the punishments with which they were threatened. And he told them of the tabernacle which was built for God's service in the wilderness, and of the temple which was afterwards built at Jerusalem by king Solomon. But Stephen said, "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, 'Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord; or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?'"

Stephen had now answered the false accusations of his enemies. He had shown them that he did not speak against Moses and against God; but that he loved and feared God, and honored Moses his servant. He had told them about the tabernacle in the wilderness, and about the temple at Jerusalem; and perhaps he wished now to explain to them how the services of the tabernacle and the temple, the sacrifices and the ceremonies were done away in Christ, the Prophet of whom Moses had spoken. And then he would have warned them of the destruction which must come upon them if they rejected that Prophet; and this would have explained the meaning of the words he was accused of saying:—"Jesus shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us."

But the enemies of Stephen were beginning to be impatient, so he hastened to the end of his speech. He wished to make them feel their

great wickedness, and he spoke to them very solemnly indeed. He said, "Your fathers persecuted the prophets who foretold the coming of Christ; and you have betrayed and murdered that Just One." When they heard this, they grew very angry, and gnashed on Stephen with their teeth. But he was still calm and gentle; and being full of the Holy Ghost, he looked up to heaven, and saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God. That Jesus who had himself suffered so much, was now looking down in love upon his faithful servant, to comfort him in his sufferings.

Then Stephen said, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." But his enemies would not attend to what he said. They cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him. Then Stephen called upon God, and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, "Lord! lay not this sin to their charge." And when he had said this, "he fell asleep."

So Stephen died; but the Bible does not say he "died;" it only says he "fell asleep." His death was so happy, so peaceful, that it was not like death; it was like calm and quiet sleep. Yet Stephen died in great pain. What could make him forget the pain, and "fall asleep" so peacefully? The sight of his Saviour standing at God's right hand to take him up to heaven. That sight was so bright and glorious that it made Stephen forget all the pain of his cruel death, and all the rage of his wicked murderers. And Stephen's heart was so full of holy love, that he could pray for his enemies, even when they were throwing stones upon him to kill him. He remembered the example of his Saviour who, when on the cross, cried, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

Stephen is called the first martyr. He was the first who suffered death for the sake of Christ. There have been many martyrs since Stephen died. First, the apostles; then the early Christians; and very many more in after times. There have been martyrs even in Christian countries. Good men and women have been persecuted unto prison and death, because they would not conform to the errors and delusions of bigoted, cruel men, and tyrannical rulers. And where are all these holy martyrs now? They are happy with Jesus, and will be so for ever. "They have come out of great tribulation," and now they are "before the throne of God," and he "shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

We should be thankful that we do not live in a time when people

are put to death for believing the truth, and for serving the Lord Jesus Christ. But we ought to pray, too, for the spirit of these holy martyrs; for if ever we should be called upon to suffer for the sake of Christ, we may be enabled to do so with their faith, and love, and boldness; remembering that if we thus suffer with Christ, "we shall also reign with him."

The apostles now returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. Then an angel of the Lord came to Philip, and said, "Arise, and go to the south, unto the way that goeth from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert."

Why was Philip to go there? What could he do in a desert where no people were living? Philip did not know; but as soon as the command was given him, he obeyed, without asking "why." Philip knew that God was wiser than he; and that every command of God is right and good; so he obeyed in faith. God had a very particular reason for sending Philip to the desert just at this time; we shall soon see what it was.

There was a country called Ethiopia, south of Egypt, and a queen ruled over it called Candace. Candace had a eunuch, or officer, who took care of all her treasures, and was very useful to her in her kingdom. This man was a Jewish proselyte; that is, he had learnt to believe in the God of Israel, and to attend to the law of Moses. So this eunuch used to go sometimes to worship, and keep the feasts at Jerusalem. It happened that he had been to Jerusalem a little time before; and now he was returning to Ethiopia across the desert, just when Philip was sent there. The eunuch was travelling in his chariot, and as he rode along, he was not idle; he had a book with him which he was reading very attentively. Perhaps he was reading it aloud to his friends and servants who were travelling with him. What book was he reading? The best book that any one can read—the Holy Scriptures.

Then the Spirit of God said to Philip, "Go and join thyself to the chariot. So Philip ran directly to the chariot; and when he came nearer he heard the words which the eunuch was reading, and spoke to him, and asked, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" The eunuch answered, "How can I, except some man should teach me?" And then he asked Philip to come and sit with him in the chariot, and explain what he was reading. So Philip did as the eunuch wished.

The place of the Scripture which he read was this: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before the shearer, so

opened he not his mouth." These words were written by Isaiah many years before. They were a prophecy of Jesus Christ; but the eunuch did not know this; so he said to Philip, "I pray thee, of whom did the prophet speak this? of himself, or of some other man?" Then Philip began at that very text, and preached unto him Jesus. He told him that these words were spoken of the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," of the Lord Jesus Christ who was slain for us, and whose blood "cleanseth from all sin."

The eunuch liked to hear Philip talk; and Philip was willing to answer his questions, and explain his difficulties. And God blessed what Philip said, and the eunuch believed in Jesus Christ as the true Messiah, the Saviour of sinners. At last they came to some water. Then the eunuch said to Philip, "See, here is water; may I be baptized?" For the eunuch wished to obey the command of that Saviour in whom he now believed. Philip answered, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." The eunuch said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And no doubt the confession came from his heart, and not from his lips only; for this eunuch was a true believer, and not a mere professor like Simon the sorcerer.

Then the chariot was stopped; and they both went down into the water, and Philip baptized the eunuch. But as soon as they came out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, in a wonderful way, which we cannot understand, and brought him to a place many miles off, where there was more holy work for Philip to do.

But what became of the eunuch after Philip was gone? He went on his way rejoicing. He had much to make him rejoice. He had learnt to believe in Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners; and he had a good hope that, when he died, he should go to that Saviour, and be with him for ever. He and Philip never met again on earth, but they have long ago met in heaven; and Philip knows now why he was sent so far off to the desert, and rejoices that he obeyed the command.

And what may we learn from this story? We may learn the duty and blessing of searching the Scriptures, and of seeking and praying to understand them. It was when the eunuch was diligently studying Isaiah, the prophet, that Philip was sent to "preach unto him Jesus." And Christ says to us, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they testify of me." But, like the eunuch, we cannot

always understand what we read, without some one to teach us. How thankful we ought to be, then, for wise and holy ministers of God's word, who are willing and able to explain it!

But we must remember, that the teaching of man alone will do us no real good. We should pray to be taught of the Spirit. He is the best teacher; and we must ask him "to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us." Then we shall rightly understand the Scriptures, not only with our heads, but with our hearts; and find them able to make us "wise unto salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus."

We are now going to read a very wonderful story about the cruel persecutor, Saul, who had driven away so many Christians from Jerusalem. Saul was a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin. He was born at Tarsus in Cilicia, and brought up in Jerusalem by Gamaliel, the learned Jew of whom we have heard before. Saul was very learned, like his master; and like him, too, he was a Pharisee, and very particular in keeping the law of Moses. And because of all this, Saul thought himself very righteous and good; too good to need a Saviour; for he did not then know the sinfulness of his own heart, nor feel the truth of the text which says, "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not."

So when Saul first heard of Jesus of Nazareth, instead of believing on him as the true Messiah, he despised, and rejected, and hated him. And when some of the people began to believe the Gospel, Saul hated and persecuted them, because they loved Christ. He even thought it was his duty to do this, and to try to prevent them from believing in the Lord Jesus. How ignorant Saul was then! And so are all who have not been taught, by the Holy Spirit, to feel themselves sinners, and to go to Christ for salvation. After persecuting the Christians in Jerusalem, Saul determined to persecute them in other cities also. So he went to the high priest, and asked for letters to the rulers of the synagogues in Damascus, giving him leave, if he found there any disciples of the Lord, to bring them bound to Jerusalem. Then the high priest gave him letters, and Saul set off to Damascus.

But as he journeyed, and came near to Damascus, there suddenly shone round about him a light from heaven; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Then Saul cried, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the voice said again, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." It was the same Jesus whom Saul

had despised, and whose disciples he had persecuted, who was now calling to him. But why did Jesus say that Saul persecuted *him?* Because Jesus regards his people as himself. He says, He that toucheth them "toucheth the apple of his eye."

But Saul did not despise Jesus now. The voice came with power to his heart, and conquered and subdued it; and Saul cried humbly, as he had never done before, "Lord! what wilt thou have me to do?" The Lord answered, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Then Saul arose; but he was not able to see, for the bright light had taken away his sight; so those who were with him led him by the hand, and brought him to Damascus.

Saul was three days at Damascus, without eating or drinking; and he was blind, too, all that time. Yet all was sent in mercy to Saul, to bring him to repentance. As he sat alone, blind and unhappy, he thought of his past life; and he felt for the first time, that he was a sinner before God; and then he began to pray for pardon. And did God hear his prayer? Yes; God had been looking upon Saul all this time; and as soon as Saul began really to pray, God heard and answered him.

There was a disciple living at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord appeared to this good man in a vision, and said, "Ananias, arise, and go into the street called Straight, and ask in the house of Judas, for a man named Saul of Tarsus; for, behold, he prayeth. And he has seen thee, in a vision, coming in, and putting thine hand upon him, that he may receive sight." But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard of this man before, and how much evil he has done to thy disciples in Jerusalem. And now he is come here with power from the priests, to bind all those who call upon thy name." Ananias did not believe, at first, that this Saul could be really humble and penitent; and perhaps he felt afraid to go to him.

But God taught Ananias that he had power to soften the hardest heart: he said, "Go thy way; for I have chosen Saul to preach my Gospel to the Gentiles, and to kings, and to the children of Israel; and he shall suffer many things for my name's sake." Then Ananias obeyed directly. He went into the street called Straight, and to the house of Judas, and there he asked for Saul of Tarsus. Then Ananias went into the room where Saul was, and laid his hands upon him, and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to thee in the way, has sent me that

ANANIAS RESTORING PAUL'S SIGHT.

thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." And immediately he received sight, and arose, and was baptized. Then he ate some meat and was strengthened; and he stayed with the disciples in Damascus, and preached Christ in the synagogues.

What wonderful power and mercy God showed in thus turning the heart of Saul of Tarsus! And God is still able and willing to soften the hardest hearts, and to pardon the greatest sinners who come to him as Saul did, when God said of him, "Behold, he prayeth." Saul had often said prayers, as the Pharisees did, with his lips, "to be seen of men;" but he had never before prayed with his heart to God in secret; and therefore his prayers had never before been heard nor answered. Do you wish to be pardoned as Saul was? Then you must come to God as he did, when he was lying blind at Damascus, and as the poor publican did in the parable and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

About this time, Barnabas went to Tarsus, to seek for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. Saul and Barnabas stayed together at Antioch a whole year. They preached the gospel there, "and many believed and turned unto the Lord."

"The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." This was a new name then given to them; what did it mean? The word Christian means a follower of Christ; one who professes to be his servant, and to own him for a Master. We who live in this country are called Christians. We profess to belong to his Church, his people, his family. But many people profess to be Christians, and are not really Christians. A real Christian loves the Saviour more than anything in the world; believes in him with all his heart, and tries to please and honor him in all he says and does. Those people, then, cannot be true Christians, who love the world, and its follies, and vanities, and sins. They cannot be true Christians if they try to please themselves more than to please Christ, and if they seek their own honor more than his. It is a very awful thing to profess to belong to Christ, and yet in heart to be "none of his." At the day of judgment Jesus will say to all such people, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

The early Christians at Antioch were really sincere; they truly loved Jesus, and showed their love by their kindness to their poor brethren. "The disciples determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea; which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of

Barnabas and Saul." This was a good way of showing their love to Jesus, for he himself had said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Christ had told his disciples that they would have much to suffer for his sake; and now trouble and persecution had begun. About this time, Herod, king of Judea, grandson of the wicked Herod who killed the children at Bethlehem, stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church. And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. And because he saw that it pleased the Jews he determined to take Peter also. Peter was now at Jerusalem; so Herod sent, and took him, and put him into prison, and commanded a number of soldiers to keep him safely. Herod did not wish to put him to death directly; but he determined after Easter to bring him out to the people, to be judged.

It was a sad time for the other disciples when Peter was in prison. They all loved him very much, and could not bear to be parted from him. And then they thought, perhaps, that they should never have him with them again. They had lost James; he had been cruelly killed; and they well knew that their enemies would kill Peter too, if they could. So they all felt very, very sad. Could they do nothing for him? Yes; there was one thing they could do. They could not take him out of prison, they could not save him from Herod's power, but they could pray for him, and so they did.

"Prayer was made without ceasing, of the church, unto God for him." This teaches us something. We may lose our friends; they may go far away from us; they may be in pain, and suffering, and trouble, and we may not be able to help and comfort them. But then we can pray for them. God can help them, though we cannot; and if he sees right, he will answer our prayers for them, as he did the prayers of the disciples for Peter.

One night, the night before Peter was to be brought out, he was sleeping in the prison, between two soldiers; he was bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison. How could Peter sleep? Was he not too anxious, too unhappy, to rest quietly? No; Peter could be peaceful and happy even in prison; he could sleep quietly, though he expected to be brought before his enemies the next morning, and perhaps put to a cruel death. And why was he so calm and happy? Because he was at peace with God, through Jesus Christ. Peter was ready to die, and therefore he had no cause for fear.

While Peter was sleeping, suddenly, in the middle of the night, a light shone in the prison, and an angel of the Lord came, and smote him on the side, and said, "Arise up quickly." And immediately the chains fell off from Peter's hands. Then the angel said again, "Gird thyself, and put on thy sandals." And Peter did so. Once more the angel said, "Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me." Then Peter arose, and followed the angel. They passed through the prison, but the soldiers did not awake; then they came to the door, but the keepers were still sleeping; so they went out, and came to the iron gate. How could they open the gate? Did the angel undo the lock and move away the great bars? No, he had no need to do this; the gate opened of itself; for God made it open that his servant Peter might be delivered. So Peter and the angel went through, and came into the city. Then they passed along one street, and, in a moment, the angel was gone.

All this was done so suddenly, and so quickly, that Peter hardly knew what had happened, but thought he saw a vision. But when he was come to himself, he said, "Now I know that the Lord has sent his angel, and delivered me out of the hand of Herod." So Peter, full of joy and thankfulness, went on, and came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, surnamed Mark, and knocked at the door. Were not all the people in the house asleep? No; though it was so late, they were awake; for they had a great work to do, and they could not rest till it was done. What was that work? It was prayer. They were all gathered together praying.

Perhaps they were too busy with their daily duties to come together earlier; so these good people met in the night-time for prayer, and none of them complained of being too tired and sleepy to attend to holy things. No; they all thought it was the best and happiest time of the day; for they had learnt to love the work of prayer and praise, better than any other work they had to do. They were praying, too, for Peter. They had not forgotten their dear friend who had been so long in prison. They prayed for him again and again; for, though God did not answer their prayers directly, they felt quite sure that he would at last, when the right and best time came. And so he did. This very night, while they were praying, Peter came and knocked at the door.

A young maid, named Rhoda, went out to ask who was there; and when she heard Peter's voice answering, she was so glad, that, without opening the gate, she ran back, and told those in the house that Peter was

come. But they would not believe it. They said, "No; it cannot be; thou art mad." But Rhoda told them she was quite sure that it was really Peter. All this time Peter stood knocking at the gate; so at last they opened it, and found, to their great joy, that Peter was there indeed. Then he told them how he had been delivered, and said, "Go, and show these things unto the brethren." So he left them, and went to another place, where he would be safe from his enemies.

In the morning, when the soldiers came to look for Peter, they were very much astonished not to find him; and no one knew how he had escaped, nor where he was. Herod sought for him a long time in vain; and then he became angry, and commanded the keepers to be put to death. This was very unjust and cruel of Herod. The keepers were not to blame; but Herod was so angry that he did not care what cruel or unjust thing he did.

And now we come to the sad end of this wicked king. He was soon punished for all his crimes in a very dreadful way. Not long after Peter's escape, Herod was one day seated upon his throne in his palace at Cesarea, dressed in his royal garments. All his lords and his nobles were there, and Herod made a speech to them as they stood before him. Then they all gave a shout, and cried, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." But Herod did not reprove them for this foolish and wicked flattery; he loved to hear himself praised, and to think of his power, and greatness, and riches; forgetting that it was God who had given him these things, and that he could, in one moment, take them all away. And God soon showed the people, and Herod himself, too, how vain and foolish this flattery was. He showed them that this wicked king was not a god, but a weak, helpless man, unable to save himself from sickness and death when they came upon him. "The angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost."

Saul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem, with the money sent from the Christians at Antioch; and when they had finished their work there, they returned to Antioch. Then they were told by the Holy Ghost to go and preach the gospel in other places; so after prayer for God's blessing, they left their friends at Antioch, and sailed to Cyprus.

There was living at Paphos, in Cyprus, a governor named Sergius Paulus. He was a Gentile; a wise man; and he showed that he had wisdom by wishing to hear the apostles preach. He wanted to know the word of God. But there was a sad enemy of the gospel living at Paphos

too. This was a man named Elymas; he was a sorcerer, or magician, and he not only hated the truth himself, but he wished to prevent Sergius Paulus also from believing it. But Saul, being filled with the Holy Ghost, and knowing the wickedness of Elymas, fixed his eyes upon him, and said, "O thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? Behold, now the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season."

And as Saul said this, there fell a darkness upon Elymas, and he went about seeking some one to lead him by the hand. We do not read whether this wicked man ever repented of his great sin, and became willing to receive the gospel. But the governor, Sergius Paulus, when he saw what was done, believed; and we may hope that he became a true disciple of the Lord Jesus. How dangerous it is to fight against God and his gospel! We have often seen this before. Many times we have read of wicked men trying to destroy the truth: but they never could, and they never will; for God is stronger than they, and his word must prosper at last.

Then Saul, who was now called Paul, left Paphos with his company, and went to Perga, and afterwards to Antioch; not the Antioch we read about before, but another Antioch, in Pisidia. There they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down. After reading the law and the prophets, the ruler of the synagogue asked the apostles to preach to the people. So Paul stood up, and spoke to them for a long time about the history of Israel in past times, and particularly about king David. And then he told them of that Son of David, according to promise, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour. And he explained to them how Jesus came into the world, and died, and rose again, to save sinners who will believe in him.

Some of the people, particularly among the Gentiles, were willing to believe the gospel; and they begged the apostles to preach the same things to them again; and the next Sabbath almost all the city came to hear the word of God. But many of the Jews were filled with envy and hatred, and could not bear to see the people coming to hear the gospel, and contradicted all that Paul and Barnabas said. Then the apostles spoke very faithfully and boldly to these unbelieving Jews, and said, "It was right that the word of God should be preached to you first, for this was the command of Christ; but as you have put it away from you, and are careless about everlasting life in heaven, we shall now leave you, and

go to the Gentiles. For the Lord has commanded us also to make known his salvation to the ends of the earth."

When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and many of them believed; but the Jews raised a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them from the city. So the disciples left Antioch and went to Iconium. There again they were persecuted by Jews and Gentiles too; so they escaped to Derbe and Lystra, cities of Lycaonia.

How very sad all these stories are! They show us this truth, and a very awful truth it is,—that the natural heart is "enmity against God." All our hearts are, by nature, like the hearts of these unbelieving, persecuting Jews and Gentiles. Let us pray, then, to be made "children of grace;" to be received into the family of Christ, and to become followers of God as his "dear children."

Paul and his companions went through Phrygia, and Galatia, and Mysia, and at last they came to Troas. A Christian church was formed in Galatia, to which Paul afterwards sent the epistle called "the epistle to the Galatians."

While Paul was at Troas, he saw, in a vision, a man of Macedonia, saying to him, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." As soon as Paul had seen this vision, he determined to go directly to Macedonia; for he knew the vision came from God, and that it was sent to tell him that there was work to do in Macedonia. So he took a ship, and sailed to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and then he came to Philippi, a chief city in Macedonia, peopled by Romans.

Paul and his friends stayed some days at Philippi; and on the Sabbath they went to the river's side, to a place where the people used to meet for prayer; and Paul sat down, and taught the women who came there. One of these women was named Lydia. She was a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, and a worshipper of the true God. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things which Paul said; and she became a believer in Christ, and was baptized. Lydia begged them to come into her house, and stay there.

People may hear the gospel preached to them, but they will never be the better for it, unless God opens their hearts, as he did Lydia's. All our hearts are by nature shut against the truth; and therefore, whenever we read or hear the Scriptures, we should pray, "Lord, open our hearts, that we may understand and receive thy word."

There was another person at Philippi, to whom Paul was useful. This was a young woman who was possessed with an evil spirit, and pretended to foretell future things. She was a slave; and her wicked and cruel masters gained a great deal of money by her; for many people came to see her, and to hear the things she said. When this young woman saw Paul and his companions, she followed them for many days, crying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." This was the truth; but the evil spirit did not mean the people to think it was; nor did the poor slave herself understand rightly what she said.

But, at last, Paul being grieved, and full of pity, turned, and said to the spirit, "I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her;" and the evil spirit came out that same hour. And then the poor slave no longer said the wicked things she had said before; but became, we may hope, a true disciple of the Lord Jesus. But when her masters saw what was done, they were very angry, because now they would gain no more money by her; so they caught Paul and Silas, and brought them before the judges, and said, "These Jews greatly trouble our city, and teach things which are unlawful for us to receive, being Romans."

Then the multitude rose up, and the judges commanded that the apostles should be beaten. So first they were beaten very cruelly, and then cast into prison; and the jailor was told to keep them safely. This jailor was a cruel, hard-hearted man, and very willing to do all the judges wished. So he thrust Paul and Silas into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

How sad it was for these two good men to be so cruelly punished for preaching the gospel, and trying to do good! But Paul and Silas did not feel sad. They could be peaceful and happy even in the prison; for they knew that God was with them there, and they rejoiced to suffer for his sake. "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them." And God heard them too, and answered their prayer in a very wonderful way. He sent a great earthquake, which shook the prison to the foundations; and all the doors were opened, and every one's chains were loosed. The noise awoke the jailor out of his sleep; and when he saw what had happened, he thought that all the prisoners had escaped; and he drew his sword, and was going to kill himself.

PAUL AND THE PHILIPPIAN JAILOR.

But Paul cried out, "Do thyself no harm; for we are all here." Then the jailor called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Then they answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" and they preached the gospel to him, and to all who were in the house. And that same hour, the jailor brought them out, and took them into his own house, and gave them food to eat; and was baptized with all his family, believing and rejoicing in the Lord.

What a wonderful change this was in the jailor! A few hours before, he was cruel and hard-hearted; and hated the apostles, and the gospel they preached. Now, he was gentle and willing to be taught; and had become a humble believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The grace of God can change any heart; and he is willing to pardon and to save the greatest sinners. But there is only one way of being saved; and that is the way which Paul and Silas showed to the poor penitent jailor: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

In the morning the magistrates sent to the prison, saying, "Let these men go." For the earthquake had frightened the magistrates as well as the jailor; but we are not told that they learnt to believe in Jesus Christ, as he did. Then the jailor went to Paul and Silas, and said, "The magistrates have sent to let you go; now then depart, and go in peace." But Paul answered, "No; they have punished us openly, uncondemned, and they should not send us away secretly. Let them come themselves and fetch us out." When the magistrates heard this they were afraid; for they thought they might perhaps displease the emperor of Rome if they ill-treated Roman citizens; so they came directly, and brought out the apostles, and sent them away. Then Paul and Silas went to the house of Lydia, and saw the brethren there, and comforted them and departed.

Thus began a little Christian church at Philippi. Paul, some years after, wrote a very beautiful letter to these Christians. It is called in the Testament, "the epistle to the Philippians." The Philippians loved Paul very much, and often comforted him in his sorrows, and helped him in times of need. And Paul loved them too, and remembered and prayed for them when he was far distant from Philippi; and he sent them this letter by Timothy, to encourage them to go on serving the Lord; that, at last, he and they might meet in heaven, and never be parted again. He said,

"Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Paul and his friends then went on to Thessalonica, where was a Jewish synagogue, and taught there on the Sabbath day. Some of the Jews believed, and so did many of the Greeks. But the Jews who did not believe were angry, and called together some wicked men, and went to the house where the apostles lodged, to seek for them. The house belonged to a good man named Jason. These cruel enemies could not find the apostles; so they laid hold of Jason and the other brethren, and brought them before the rulers of the city, and said, "Those men who have troubled the world in other places, are come here also; and Jason has received them into his house. They are teaching people to disobey our laws; they say that there is another king, named Jesus."

This troubled the rulers very much; but they did no hurt at that time to Jason and the others, but let them go. Then the brethren sent away Paul and Silas by night; and they came to Berea. God blessed Paul's preaching to many people at Thessalonica; and a Christian church was formed there, to which Paul afterwards wrote the two epistles to the Thessalonians.

Were the Jews at Berea more willing to attend to Paul than the Jews at Thessalonica? Yes; we are told they were "more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so; therefore many of them believed." The Jews at Thessalonica hardly attended to what the apostles preached; those at Berea not only attended, but thought a good deal about it afterwards. They searched the Old Testament Scriptures to see if they could find in them anything like what Paul said. And they did find much there about the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Moses, and David, and Isaiah, and others, had prophesied.

And then many of these Bereans believed; for God blessed their searching of his word, and taught them more and more by his Spirit, and helped them to understand and believe the truth. This is a lesson for us. We ought not only to hear the gospel preached, but to read and search

into the Bible for ourselves. We should "prove all things" by the Scriptures; asking God to enable us to understand them aright; and then he will lead us, by his Holy Spirit, into all truth, as he did the wise and noble Bereans. But Paul could not stay long at this place; for the unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica came, and stirred up the people of Berea too; so the brethren sent Paul away, and he went to Athens.

We read a great deal about Athens in history. It was a place very famous for learning, and wisdom, and knowledge, and politeness. But yet these people at Athens had no true wisdom; for they were ignorant of God, and of the Bible, and of the way to heaven. They worshipped many false gods, and had feasts in honor of them; and these gods, they thought, were not holy and good, as the God of the Bible is; but bad and wicked; of like passions with themselves. Yet the Athenians worshipped them still; and thus, "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools;" for they were "vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

When Paul saw all this, he was grieved to the heart. He too was learned, and able to enjoy much which the Athenians enjoyed; and to admire many things which they admired. But Paul had that true wisdom of which they knew nothing. He had "learnt to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" and he could not feel happy at Athens, beautiful as it was, because "he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." So Paul went about, among the Jews, and the Greeks too, speaking to them of Jesus and the resurrection. At last, some of the philosophers, or wise men, met him, and asked him to explain to them what these new doctrines meant.

So Paul stood on the top of a rock, called Mars Hill, and said, "Ye men of Athens, as I passed by, and looked at the gods ye worship, I saw an altar with this written on it—To the Unknown God. Now this God whom ye ignorantly worship, him I preach unto you. The true God of whom I tell you, made the world, and all things that are in it; and he gives to us life, and breath, and all things. And it is his will that we should seek him, and feel after him, and find him; for he is not far from any of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being. Then we ought not to think that this great God is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, as many ignorantly do. God is now making himself known in all the world; and he commands people everywhere to repent, and to turn to him and

believe. For a day will come, when God will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he raised from the dead, even this same Jesus that I preach to you."

When Paul began to talk about the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; others said, "We will hear thee again another time." So Paul departed from them. Yet there were some, even in Athens, who believed what Paul preached. Among them was a man named Dionysius, and a woman called Damaris, and others with them. And thus while Paul preached "Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness," those who believed found Christ to be "the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

So Paul left Athens, and went to Corinth, another city in Greece. There he found a Jew named Aquila, who had just come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because the Roman emperor had commanded all Jews to go away from Rome. Aquila and Priscilla were believing Jews, and very kind and friendly to Paul; so he went and stayed at their house. But Paul, and Aquila, and Priscilla, did not live in idleness; they had to work for their daily bread; and as they were of the same trade, they worked together; for they were tentmakers.

This is a lesson for us. God's people should be anxious to do good, and be useful to others; but they must remember, too, not to neglect their own daily duties. If they are poor, as Paul and his friends were, they should work diligently to get their own living, that they may not be troublesome to those around them. And if, while they work with their hands, they think of God, and love him in their hearts, he will bless them in everything they do. St. Paul says a great deal in his Epistles about industry and diligence; and he reproves the idle and slothful, commanding them, "by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." And he says again, that "if any would not work, neither should he eat."

Every Sabbath day, Paul went into the synagogue, and talked to the Jews and Greeks. The ruler of the synagogue, who was named Crispus, attended to what Paul preached, and believed with all his family; and so did many of the Corinthians. There were enemies of the gospel at Corinth, as at other places; but God appeared to Paul in a vision by night, and told him not to fear them. He said, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall hurt thee; for I have

much people in this city." This encouraged Paul; so he stayed a year and six months at Corinth, teaching the word of God to the people.

At last the Jews were so angry with Paul, that they laid hold of him, and brought him before Gallio, the Roman governor of Achaia, to be judged. They said, "This man teaches people to worship God contrary to the law." This was untrue; and Paul was just going to explain that what he preached was not contrary to the law; but Gallio was impatient, and would not hear. He said, "All this is no business of mine. I understand nothing of your law; you must look to the matter yourselves; for I will be no judge of such things;" and then he drove them away from the judgment-seat. So the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, a friend of Paul, and beat him; but Gallio said nothing to them, for "he cared for none of these things."

Gallio was not so persecuting and cruel as many of the enemies of the Gospel were; but he was really, perhaps, as much an enemy as any of them. He knew nothing of God, nor Christ, nor the way of salvation; and he wished to know nothing of them; for "Gallio cared for none of these things." But how sad it is to be careless about such matters! They are far more necessary for us to care about than any worldly things; and at the day of judgment we shall find them to be so. All will care for "these things" then; but at that awful time, caring for them will do no good: for it will be too late then to seek for pardon, and salvation, and eternal life in heaven. Let us "care for the things that belong unto the Lord," and unto salvation, now; and then we shall be ready for death and judgment, whenever they may come.

Paul stayed at Corinth some time after this; and then he took leave of the brethren there, and sailed towards Syria, with Priscilla and Aquila. A great many of the Corinthians became true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; and Paul loved them, and afterwards wrote them two long letters—the two epistles to the Corinthians. These letters are full of good advice, and kind warnings, and faithful reproofs, too; for the Corinthians often did things which were wrong; and Paul loved them too well not to tell them of their faults.

But he did all in affection, and like a kind and wise father; and they received his advice and reproofs like obedient and affectionate children. And then he comforted them when they were sorrowful, and prayed God to comfort them too; and he ended his last letter by telling them how

they might be truly happy; happy in this world, and eternally happy in heaven: "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect; be of good comfort; be of one mind; live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

On his way to Syria, Paul stopped at Ephesus, and left Aquila and Priscilla there; and then he went on, promising soon to return if it should be the will of God. Another faithful minister came to Ephesus about this time; a Jew, named Apollos. He was a sincere believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and learned in the Scriptures, and bold, and diligent, and full of love. But Apollos was young, and did not yet understand the way of God perfectly; so Aquila and Priscilla used to ask him to their house; and then they talked to him about holy things, and explained to him what he did not know before.

This was very useful to Apollos; for Aquila and Priscilla were older than he, and had served God longer, and had more knowledge. It was right and kind of them to instruct him; and Apollos was very grateful for their instructions. It is pleasant to see young people and older ones living as Priscilla and Aquila and Apollos did; and it is the way in which all Christians ought to live together.

And after a little time, Apollos left Ephesus, and went to other places, preaching to the Jews, and "showing by the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ;" and while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, after visiting many different countries, came again to Ephesus. There were many disciples at Ephesus; but they had not yet received the Holy Ghost in that wonderful way in which it had been given to many others. Their hearts had been changed and made new by the Spirit; but they had not yet been taught by him to speak with tongues, and to prophesy. So Paul, after he had baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus, laid his hands on them, and prayed; and then the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied. Paul stayed two years at Ephesus, preaching and working miracles in the name of Jesus.

At last, some of the unbelieving Jews in Ephesus pretended that they could do these wonders too; so they called, over a man who had an evil spirit, the name of Jesus, saying, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." But the evil spirit answered, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" And the man who had the evil spirit leaped upon them, and overcame them; so they fled from the house wounded and frightened. This was soon known among all the people at Ephesus;

and many of them, when they heard it, believed; for it showed them that Paul worked miracles by the power of God, and that he was not a mere pretender, like those wicked, unbelieving Jews.

And many of those who had been magicians, or sorcerers, when they believed the gospel, and found how foolish and sinful their arts were, brought their books, and burnt them before all men. Those books were full of what was wicked, and could do good to no one; so the Ephesians did right to burn them.

But after a time, there was great trouble in the city of Ephesus; for the enemies of the truth began to persecute the disciples there, as in other places. There was a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver images of Diana, the idol-goddess of the Ephesians. Demetrius was an idolater, and he gained his living by this wicked trade of image-making. But when the people of Ephesus became believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, they gave up their idolatry, and wanted no more silver images from Demetrius. Then the silversmith began to fear that he should lose his business; so he called together all the other silversmiths in the place, and said to them, "Sirs, you know that by this trade we have our wealth. Now this Paul, who preaches here, is turning away the people from the worship of Diana, and telling them that those are no gods which are made with hands. So now our trade is thought nothing of; no one comes to buy our silver images; and the temple of our great goddess Diana is despised." Then those who heard what Demetrius said were very angry, and cried out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." All the people in the city, when they heard the noise, came together; and some of them caught hold of two of the friends of Paul, and hurried them away. Paul wished to go to them; but his other friends would not let him put himself into danger: so they kept him safely.

The tumult in the city lasted a long time. Some cried one thing, and some another; and many did not know why they had come together at all. Then a Jew, named Alexander, tried to defend himself; but as soon as he began to speak, the people cried out again, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians;" and they would not attend to any thing he said, because he was a Jew. At last, the town clerk came out to quiet the people.

He said to them, "Ye men of Ephesus, all the world knows that the people of this city worship the great goddess Diana, and the image which fell down from our god Jupiter; you need not cry out so loudly what every

one believes. You ought to be quiet, and do nothing hastily; for these men, whom you accuse, have done you no hurt; they are not robbers of churches, nor blasphemers of your goddess. If Demetrius has any thing to say against them, let the matter be decided by law; for we are in danger of being called in question ourselves about this day's uproar." And when the town clerk had said this, he sent away the multitude. So all was quiet; and then Paul called the disciples, and took leave of them, and departed.

The Ephesians were wise in many things; yet they were so foolish and so ignorant, that they could believe the silly stories which they were taught about the goddess Diana, and the image which fell down from Jupiter. There are many heathen nations as foolish now. Let us pray that God would send his gospel to them, and turn their hearts from "idols to serve the living and true God."

But there were some true Christians among the Ephesians: and to them Paul afterwards wrote a beautiful epistle, when he himself was a prisoner at Rome. And in that letter he reminded them how wicked and ignorant they had once been; and thanked God who had pardoned their sins, and made them his own children through faith in Christ Jesus. He said, "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein, in times past, ye walked according to the course of this world. At that time ye were without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

Paul went into Macedonia again; and after visiting other places, came at last to Troas, on his way to Syria, and stayed there seven days. On the first day of the week, the disciples came together, and Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the morrow. The first day of the week is our Sunday, the Christian Sabbath. The Jewish Sabbath was on the seventh day of the week; because on that day God rested from his work of creation, and "blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it." But after Christ's resurrection, the Sabbath was kept on the first day of the week; for Christians remember a still more glorious work which happened on that day. It was on the first day of the week that the Lord Jesus Christ arose from the grave, and so finished the work of our redemption.

It was in the evening, when the little company of Christians at Troas met together to hear Paul preach. They assembled in an upper room; there were many lights in the room; and as Paul had much to say

to the people, he went on preaching till midnight. There sat in a window of the room a young man named Eutychus; and as Paul was long preaching, this young man fell asleep, and at last sank down with sleep, and fell from the window, and was taken up dead.

All the disciples were in great trouble, when they saw what had happened; but Paul went down to the place where the dead body lay, and fell on it, and prayed God to raise Eutychus to life again. And God, who had before raised the dead at the prayers of Elijah and Elisha, was pleased to hear the prayer of Paul now, and to assure him that Eutychus should live again. So Paul said to those who were sorrowing around, "Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him." Then Paul came up again, and ate bread with the disciples, and talked to them till morning, and then departed.

Paul left Troas, and went on foot to Assos; then he took ship, and sailed to Miletus. He was anxious to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost; so he hastened on his journey from place to place. But he would not leave Miletus without seeing some very dear friends. These were the elders of the church of Ephesus. He sent for them, that he might talk to them once more, before he took leave of them for ever. So when they were come, he spoke to them very affectionately and tenderly. He reminded them of all that he had said in times past; and then told them, that now he was going to Jerusalem, not knowing what might happen to him there.

But he said, "The Holy Ghost tells me that, in every place, bonds and troubles await me. Yet none of these things move me; neither think I my life dear unto myself; I only wish to finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus. And now I know that all you among whom I have preached shall see my face no more. Remember, then, what I have told you, and take care of the flock which God has given you to feed—the church which he has bought with his own blood. I know that wolves will soon come among you, and try to destroy that little flock. Enemies will come, and try to lead you away from the truth of the gospel. Watch, then, and pray; and remember how I have warned you for three years, night and day, with tears. And now I give you up to God, and to the word of his grace; for he is able to keep you, and at last bring you safely to the inheritance he has prepared for them that are sanctified."

And when Paul had said this, he knelt down and prayed with them

PAUL TAKING LEAVE OF THE ELDERS OF EPHESUS.

all. And they wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him; sorrowing most of all for the words that he spoke—that they should see his face no more. So they went with him to the ship; then they again bid him farewell, and watched him for a long while, till at last the ship sailed far away beyond their sight, and they saw him no more.

On his voyage to Jerusalem, Paul stopped at many places. He stayed seven days at Tyre, where he found some disciples; and when the time came for him to go away, these disciples all went with him to the seashore; and then they kneeled down, and prayed together. When they had taken leave of one another, the disciples returned home; and Paul and his companions sailed on first to Ptolemais, and then to Cæsarea.

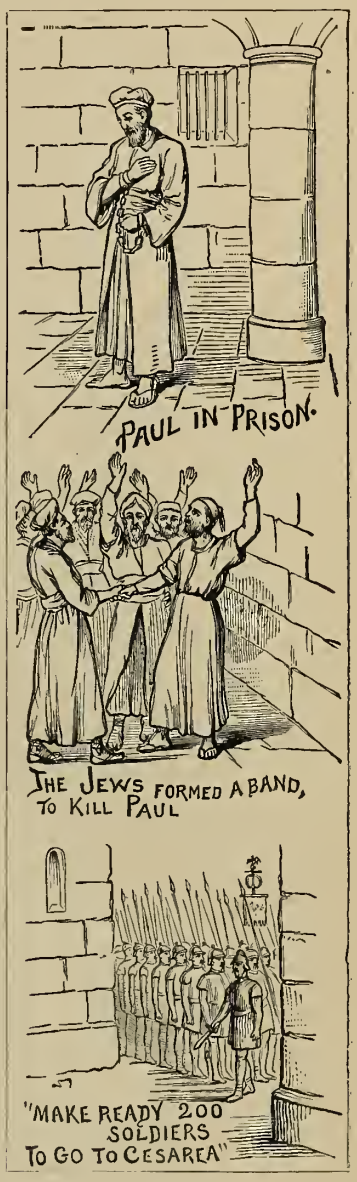
While Paul was there, a prophet came from Judea, named Agabus. This prophet had been taught, by the Holy Spirit, the things which should happen to Paul at Jerusalem. So he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus saith the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owneth this girdle, and shall give him up to the Gentiles."

When the friends of Paul heard this, they all begged him not to go to Jerusalem. They loved him very much, and could not bear that he should suffer; and they wished to keep him with them, if they could. But what Agabus prophesied did not frighten Paul, nor trouble him at all. He turned to his friends, who were all weeping around him, and said, "What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." His own sufferings he cared nothing for; but it troubled him very much to see others in sorrow for his sake.

There was no selfishness in Paul. His only care was to be useful to others, and to glorify God in everything; either by preaching the gospel, or by suffering and dying for it. So when his friends saw how determined he was, they did not try to persuade him any more; but only said, "The will of the Lord be done." They knew that whatever God should appoint must be right, though it might be painful to Paul, and to them also, for his sake; and they left all to his will. And this is what we ought to do, in times of sorrow; we should say, "Lord, not as we will, but as thou wilt."

So Paul came to Jerusalem. The brethren there received him with great joy; but very soon, the unbelieving Jews began to persecute him, as

Agabus had prophesied. They accused him of speaking against the law, not understanding what it was that he really preached; and then they laid hold of him in the Temple, and drew him out, and tried to kill him. All Jerusalem was in an uproar; but at last the Roman captain, Lysias, came out with some soldiers; and then they became quieter, and left off beating Paul. So Lysias took him, and bound him with two chains; and then he asked the people who Paul was, and what he had done. Some cried one thing and some another, and the chief captain could not understand what they meant; but he commanded Paul to be taken to the castle. As he was carried along by the soldiers, the multitude followed, crying, "Away with him;" just as many had cried when Christ himself was taken to be put to death. Paul was now hated, and despised, and persecuted for his Master's sake.




When they came to the castle, Paul said to the chief captain, "May I speak to thee?" Paul said this in the Greek language, which surprised Lysias very much; for he had thought all this time that Paul was an Egyptian, who had made a rebellion in the country some time before. So the chief captain said, "Canst thou speak Greek? Art thou not the Egyptian who led into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?" Then Paul answered, "No; I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia. I pray thee let me speak now to these people." So Lysias gave him leave; and all the people stood quite still to hear what Paul would say.

And what did Paul speak to them about? He told them his past history: the wonderful stories which we have been reading, of his cruelties to the Christians at first, and his conversion to the faith of Christ afterwards, when going to Damascus; and of the command which God gave him, to go and preach to the Gentiles. The people heard Paul patiently

till he came to this, and then they grew very angry indeed. Why? Because, as Jews, they felt jealous of the Gentiles, and could not bear that God should show them any love or favor. This was a very bad spirit; quite different from the spirit of the gospel, which tells us that there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, but that all are "one in Christ Jesus." But these Jews were not believers in the gospel of love and peace; so they cried out, "Away with this man; it is not right that he should live."

Then the chief captain brought Paul into the castle, and commanded that he should be beaten. But while they were binding him, Paul said to a centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful to beat a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" When the centurion heard this, he went to Lysias and said, "Take care what thou doest; for this man is a Roman." Then the chief captain asked Paul himself, "Art thou a Roman?" And he answered, "Yes." Lysias began to be frightened at this; for it was unlawful to treat a free citizen of Rome as Paul had been treated. So the next day, Lysias called together the chief priests and their council; and loosed Paul from his bonds, and brought him before them to be examined.

Then Paul began to defend himself, and said, "Men and brethren, I have lived honestly before God until this day." Paul did not mean by this that he had never done anything to displease God; for he well knew how weak and sinful he was. But he meant that he had not done those things of which his enemies accused him, and that he did not deserve to be brought there to be judged.

Then the high priest, Ananias, commanded those that stood by to smite Paul upon the mouth. This was cruel and unjust too, and Paul felt that it was; so he turned to Ananias, and said, "God shall smite thee, for sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" Some of the standers by said, "Revilest thou God's high priest?" Then Paul answered, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written in God's law, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." Paul remembered, even before his cruel and unjust enemies, that he ought to give honor to those to whom honor is due. But what Paul said to Ananias was afterwards fearfully fulfilled. God did smite that wicked man. Ananias was killed, some years after, in a rebellion headed by his own son.

Paul then began to speak of the resurrection of the dead. But as some of those who heard him were Pharisees, who believed in the resur-

rection, and some were Sadducees, who did not believe in it, they began to quarrel among themselves; and the confusion was so great, that Lysias feared that Paul would be torn to pieces by the multitude; so he commanded the soldiers to take him away, and carry him into the castle. That very night, the Lord stood by him, and said, "Fear not, Paul; thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, and so thou must also in Rome."

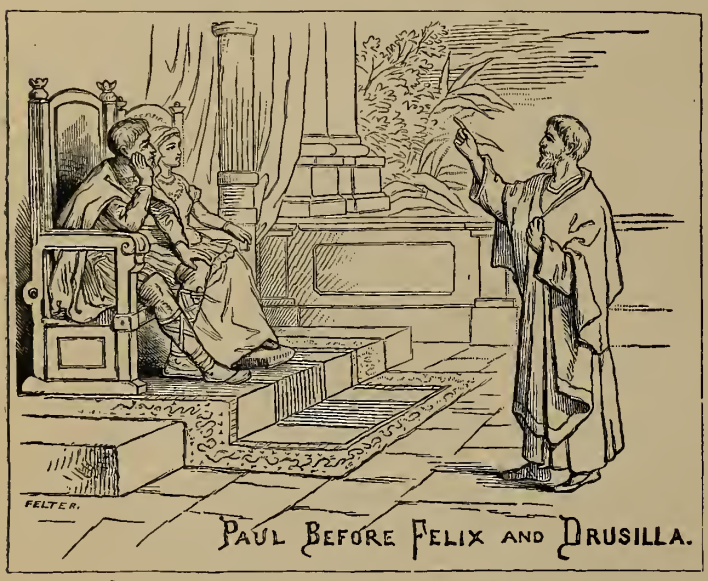
The next day, some of the Jews made a conspiracy against Paul, and determined that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed him. Then they went to the chief priests, and told them, and said, "We have determined neither to eat nor drink till we have killed Paul. Now, then, to-morrow ask the chief captain to bring him down to you again; and we, before he come near, are ready to kill him." But God had determined that Paul should not die at Jerusalem, and he found a way of escape for him.

It happened that a nephew of Paul heard something of this conspiracy, and he went directly to the castle, and told his uncle. Then Paul called a centurion, and asked him to take the young man to the chief captain. So the centurion went with Paul's nephew to Lysias, and said, "Paul, the prisoner, asked me to bring this young man to thee; he has something to tell thee." Then Lysias took Paul's nephew by the hand and drew him aside, and said, "What hast thou to tell me?"

The young man answered, "The Jews are going to-morrow to ask thee to bring Paul again into the council; but do not yield to them; for there are more than forty men who have made a vow neither to eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, looking for a promise from thee." Then the chief captain told the young man to keep all secret, and sent him away. As soon as he was gone Lysias called two centurions, and told them to make ready a number of soldiers, and horsemen, and spearsmen, and send them that night with Paul, to Cæsarea, to Felix, the governor.

Then he wrote a letter to Felix, telling him all about Paul, and how he had been accused, and how his enemies had conspired against him; and he asked Felix to hear for himself what Paul had to say. So the soldiers did as they were commanded, and brought Paul to Cæsarea, and gave the letter to the governor. When Felix had read it, he said he would hear Paul's defence as soon as his accusers were come, and commanded that Paul should be kept in Herod's judgment-hall at Cæsarea.

In a few days Ananias, the high priest, came to Cæsarea, and with him a man named Tertullus, one of Paul's enemies. Then Paul was called out, and brought before Felix; and Tertullus began to accuse him, as others had done, of despising the temple, and troubling the Jewish people. All the Jews who heard Tertullus speak agreed with him, and said that what he had spoken was true. Then Paul defended himself, saying that his enemies falsely accused him of making a tumult or disturbance in Jerusalem. But there was one thing they accused him of, which he confessed was quite true; and that was his preaching about the resurrection of the dead. Then Felix said he would hear Paul again another time; so he commanded the centurion to keep him, but to treat him kindly, and to let his friends come and see him.



PAUL BEFORE FELIX AND DRUSILLA.

After some days, Felix sent for Paul again, and heard him speak about "the faith in Christ." And as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." And Felix used often to send for him, and hear him talk; hoping that Paul would offer him money, that he might loose him. But we do not read that Felix ever found a "convenient season" for seeking to become righteous, and ready for "the judgment to come," though he trembled so much when Paul spoke to him of these things.

Perhaps Felix thought, "I will attend to all this another day; there is time enough yet;" and so he put off repentance till it was too late; and at last died without pardon, and without hope. Learn from Felix to attend to heavenly things now; and not to wait for a more "convenient season." The Bible tells us that the best season is the present: "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

After two years a new governor came to Cæsarea, named Festus; and Felix went away, leaving Paul bound. Then the Jews told Festus all about Paul; and Festus commanded that he should be brought before his judgment-seat. Paul again answered for himself, that he had done nothing against the Jews, nor against their law, nor their temple; and then he said that he wished to be judged by Cæsar, the Roman emperor.

Paul bore all his sufferings patiently, but he wished for justice; he had a right, as a Roman citizen, to be judged by Cæsar; and he thought this the best way of saving himself from his cruel enemies, the Jews. Festus was willing that it should be so. He said, "Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar shalt thou go." But after some days king Agrippa came to Cæsarea with his sister Bernice, to see Festus. This Agrippa was son of the wicked Herod who put Peter into prison. He was king of Judea, Galilee, Samaria, and some other places.

Festus told Agrippa a great deal about the prisoner Paul, and Agrippa became very anxious to see him; so the next day, when Agrippa, and Bernice, and the chief captains, and the nobles of the city, were come into the place of hearing, Festus commanded that Paul should be brought before them; and then Agrippa said to him, "Thou art permitted to speak for thyself." So Paul stretched out his hand, and answered for himself.

He told them all his history; how he was brought up, how he at first hated and persecuted the Christians; and how, at last, he was converted, and became a Christian himself, and a preacher of the Gospel. And then he told them what it was he preached. It was about the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Moses and the prophets wrote, who died for sinners, and rose again the third day. When Paul said this, Festus cried out, with a loud voice, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." For Festus did not believe what Paul said.

But Paul answered calmly, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and soberness." And then he turned to Agrippa and said, "The king knoweth these things; they are not hidden from him. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." For Agrippa professed the Jewish religion, and had often heard and read Moses and the prophets. Agrippa felt the power of what Paul said, and answered, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Then Paul said, "I would to God, that not only thou, but all those who hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

When he had spoken these words, Agrippa, and Bernice, and Festus, and all the company, rose up, and went apart by themselves, and began to talk together about Paul. They agreed that he was innocent; but as he had appealed to Cæsar, it was determined that he should be sent to Rome. And did Agrippa become a Christian? No; we do not read that he ever did. He was half inclined to believe; almost determined to love the Saviour whom Paul loved; but he never was, we may fear, really and truly a Christian. And therefore, like Felix, when death came, Agrippa was not ready for it; his sins were not pardoned; his heart was not made new; and he died without hope, notwithstanding all he had felt and wished, perhaps, when Paul preached to him.

Let this sad story teach you to be decided in religion; and to be decided at once. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve;" and pray that you may be enabled to say with all your heart, as Joshua did, "As for me, I will serve the Lord."

When all was ready, Paul and some of his fellow-prisoners were given up to the care of a centurion, and began their voyage towards Rome. As they sailed along, they touched at Sidon; and the centurion kindly allowed Paul to go on shore, and see his friends, and refresh himself. Then they left Sidon, and passed by Cyprus, and sailed over the seas of Cilicia and Pamphylia, and came to Myra in Lycia. There the centurion found another ship sailing to Italy, so he put the prisoners into it. Then they sailed very slowly for some days, for the wind was against them; and at last they came to Crete, to a place called the Fair Havens.

It was now late in the year, and sailing became dangerous, because of the storms which were very common and very violent in those seas; so Paul called to those in the ship, and said, "Sirs, I see that this voyage will be with much hurt and danger, not only to the ship, but also to our lives." But most of them were anxious to sail to Phenice, another haven of Crete, and there to winter. So they would not attend to Paul, who wished them to stay quietly where they were; but as the south wind blew softly, they loosed from the Fair Havens, and sailed close by Crete.

Not long after, a stormy wind arose, and the ship was tossed about upon the waves, and the sky became black with clouds, and they saw neither sun nor stars for many days. Then they wished they had taken Paul's advice; but it was too late now. So they cast their goods out of the ship, to lighten it, and thought only how they might save their lives.

Soon all hope was taken away; every one was in terror, expecting that the ship must sink, and that they would be swallowed up in the deep waters, and rise no more.

But Paul was peaceful and happy still; and when the others were so much frightened, he stood in the midst of them, and said, "Fear not; there shall be no loss of any man's life, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, 'Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Cæsar; and God has given thee all them that sail in the ship with thee.' Be of good comfort, then; for I believe God, that it shall be as it was told me. But we must be cast on a certain island."

Soon after, the shipmen found that they were coming near to some country. Then they feared they might fall upon the rocks, as it was now night, so they cast out their anchors, and wished for day. The sailors wanted to leave the ship, and escape in a boat; but Paul said to the centurion and soldiers, "If these men do not stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." So the soldiers prevented these selfish men from leaving the ship, at a time when they were wanted so much. Then Paul comforted them, and told them to take some meat, for they had fasted a long time, and he gave thanks to God before them all, and broke bread, and ate.

When it was day, they found themselves close to the land. They did not know what the name of the country was, nor who lived in it; but they determined to seek safety there. The cruel soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners, fearing that some of them might swim out and escape. But the centurion was willing to save Paul, and would not let the soldiers do as they wished.

The ship was now almost broken to pieces by the violence of the waves; so the centurion commanded that those who could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land; and the rest, some on

boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they all escaped safe to land.

A storm at sea is a very fearful thing. The Psalmist tells us so, when he says, "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them to the haven where they would be."

You may never have seen a storm at sea, and perhaps you never will. But there are storms of another kind, which we must all meet with some time or other. Life is like a voyage, and troubles and sorrows are like the storms and tempests on the sea. At the beginning of life, everything, perhaps, looks fair and sunny; and young people think it will always be so: just as these shipmen thought that their voyage would be safe and pleasant, "when the south wind blew softly."

But a storm soon came upon them, and so sorrow will come upon us; for, as the Bible says, we are "born to trouble." And what can comfort us then? Only what comforted Paul, and what comforted the poor disciples when they were tossed upon the waves in the sea of Galilee;—believing that Christ is near, saying, "Fear not; it is I; be not afraid." If he is with us, we need fear none of the storms of life; for he will keep us in them all, and bring us safely through the "waves of this troublesome world, to the land of everlasting life."

Paul and his companions soon found that the land to which they had escaped was called Melita. It is an island in the Mediterranean Sea, south of Sicily, and is now called Malta. The people then living at Melita were ignorant heathens; but they were very kind to the poor shipwrecked people; for they lighted a fire, and invited them to come and warm themselves by it, because of the rain and cold. So Paul gathered some sticks, and threw them on the fire, and they all stood round warming themselves.

But Paul, and the others, had not seen a viper which was hid among the sticks; and now the heat brought it out, and it fastened upon Paul's hand. When the heathens saw this, they said one to another, "No doubt that man is a murderer; he has escaped from the sea; but he will be

PAUL KEEPS THE SAILORS ON BOARD THE SHIP.

punished for his wickedness here; he will not be suffered to live." But Paul shook off the viper into the fire, and felt no hurt. The islanders looked on for a long time, thinking that Paul would certainly die; but when they found that he was not hurt, they changed their minds, and said he must be a god. These poor people were sadly ignorant, but Paul was able and willing to teach them better; and so he did.

One of the chief men in the island was named Publius. He was very kind to Paul, and lodged him in his house three days. The father of Publius was very ill of a fever; so Paul went in to see him, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. When the people heard of this, many others came to Paul to be cured, and he did good to them all. But Paul was most anxious to do good to their souls; so he used to speak to them of the Lord Jesus Christ, the good physician, who could heal them of a disease much worse than any bodily sickness. We may believe that many of these poor islanders became true Christians, through the preaching of Paul; and this made him so happy, that he forgot all his past sufferings and dangers.

After three months, Paul and his companions took leave of their kind friends at Melita, and sailed in a new ship to Rome. There were some Christians at Rome, to whom Paul had before written the epistle to the Romans; and when these Christians heard that he was coming, they went to meet him, as far as Appii Forum. Paul was very glad to see them, and thanked God, and took courage.

Then they all went on to Rome. As soon as they were come there, the centurion delivered the other prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was suffered to live by himself, with a soldier that kept him. A great many Jews came to see Paul; and he told them all that had happened to him, and why he was sent to Rome; for they had heard nothing of it before. Then they asked him to tell them those things which he preached, and for which he was accused; so he invited them to his lodging, and there spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and about Jesus the Messiah; teaching them from the law of Moses and the prophets, from morning until evening. "And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." Paul spoke very faithfully and solemnly to the unbelievers; and then they departed. Perhaps they never again heard the Gospel preached to them.

Paul stayed in his own house at Rome two years, "teaching those

things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, no man forbidding him." He wrote many of his epistles while at Rome. Besides those of which we have read before, he sent one to the Colossians, and another to Titus, the first bishop of Crete; it is thought also that the epistle to the Hebrews, or Jewish Christians, was written by Paul. Thus he could be useful even when a prisoner; and he was enabled to bear all his sufferings with patience, knowing that he was "the prisoner of the Lord;" "an ambassador in bonds" for Christ's sake; and he could say, even with joy, "for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."

One of the last letters that Paul wrote, was the epistle to Philemon. Philemon was a rich man of Colosse, who had learnt to believe the Gospel from hearing Paul preach. Philemon had a servant named Onesimus; but this servant was very unlike his good master, and very unlike what servants should be. He was a dishonest and wicked man. He stole some of Philemon's property, and then ran away with it, and escaped to Rome. But while there, Onesimus heard Paul preach; and God blessed what was said, so that it brought Onesimus to repent of his sins, and to ask for pardon through Jesus Christ, and for grace to serve God for the time to come. Thus Onesimus became a true Christian; and then he wished to go back to his master, and tell him how sorry he was, and ask for forgiveness.

But perhaps Onesimus felt half afraid at first, lest Philemon should not receive him, nor believe what he said. So Paul wrote a letter, telling Philemon all about Onesimus, and asking him to forgive him; and then he sent the servant with it to Colosse. Paul said in this letter, "I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, which in time past was unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: whom I have sent again. Thou therefore receive him; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved." For Onesimus was now a believer in Jesus, as well as Philemon; and in Christ there is "neither bond nor free;" for all are one in him; therefore Philemon was not only to pardon his servant, but to love him too.

Paul remembered that Onesimus had injured Philemon; he had stolen some of his property; and perhaps Onesimus was not now able to repay him; though, no doubt, he would try to do so, if he could; so Paul said, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee anything, put that on my account; I will repay it." How kind and generous Paul was! And we may believe that Philemon was kind and generous too, and that he received Onesimus, and forgave and forgot all his past wickedness, and did

not wish to be repaid by Paul. For Philemon himself owed much to Paul, more than he could ever pay;—he had learnt from him to seek the salvation of his soul.

What became of Paul at last? We are now very near the end of his history. After two years, he was set free; and then he visited those places where he had formed churches; and warned, and advised, and comforted the Christians in them. Paul also went to other and more distant countries. It is thought that he travelled even as far as England, and was the first who preached the gospel in Britain. At last he returned to Rome. He was now very old. When he wrote to Philemon, he called himself "Paul the aged;" and he had long been looking forward to death, —to a violent and cruel death; but he looked forward to it with peace and joy.

He said to Timothy, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." And now the time was come for Paul to be offered. He had labored, and preached, and suffered for Christ; and at last he died for his sake. He was beheaded at Rome, by the command of Nero, the wicked and cruel emperor. We are not told anything about his last hours, and his dying words; but we know that he must have died happily, because he died trusting in Christ, and for his sake; and now he has received "a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

What happened to the other apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ? All suffered, and most of them were put to death, for their Master's sake. Peter, after laboring and preaching much, particularly among the Jews, and writing two beautiful epistles, was crucified in his old age, as Christ had foretold. He remembered his Saviour's words, "Follow me;" and he did follow him faithfully, even unto death.

James was slain by Herod, as we read before. The other James, called "the Less," Andrew, Thomas, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon, Jude, and Matthias, were put to death at different places, and in different ways. James the Less wrote an epistle; so also did Jude.

Thomas, it is supposed, went as far as Persia and India, and preached to the heathens in those countries; and was, at last, put to death by the idolatrous Brahmins, or priests of India. Yet God blessed the labors of his faithful servant and martyr, even long after his death. Churches were

formed among the wild mountains of India; and Christians are still found there, who, it is thought, are descended from those first converted by the preaching of Thomas.

The apostle who lived the longest was John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He was not put to death, as the others were; but he was cruelly persecuted, and at last sent to the isle called Patmos, far away from his country and his friends. But John had the peace of God in his heart, and therefore he could be contented and happy even in a desert island.

One Lord's day, the first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath, John was sitting alone, thinking on heavenly things. He could not go now to the house of God, and worship there with his people: but John could still keep the Sabbath in his own heart;—"he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Suddenly he heard behind him a great voice, like the sound of a trumpet; and turning round, he saw standing by him "one like unto the Son of man." It was the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who had come to comfort his servant John; but he did not now look as he had done when he was on earth, as "a man of sorrows," when John saw him suffering in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross of Calvary. He appeared now in glory. "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass; and his voice as the sound of many waters; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

The sight was too bright and glorious for John to bear, and he fell at his feet as dead, as he had done once before, when Jesus appeared in glory at his transfiguration. But Jesus laid his hand on John, and said, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore. Amen." Then John was comforted; for he felt that Jesus was still the same; as merciful and full of love now, as when John had followed him, and listened to his words, so many years before. Jesus never changes. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

The book of Revelation is very difficult to explain, and can only in part be understood by those who are of riper years, and who well study and pray over it. The prophecies are written in dark terms, on purpose, because otherwise all the world would know them; and they are only designed to be a guide to those who wish to know the mind of God, and to mark his providence in his dealings with his Church.

I cannot therefore attempt to do more than to tell you that most of

the language here used is the language of signs; that is, certain things are made to mean other things. John, in his inspired visions, saw all that he states; but then what he saw only represented realities in other forms.

John wrote several Epistles. The first was called "general," because it was not sent to any particular church or person. The design of writing it was to promote brotherly love, to warn against doctrines that allowed men to live in sin, and give clear notions of the nature of God, and the divine glory of Jesus Christ. There is an anecdote of this apostle worthy of being remembered, both by young and old, whom the venerable John was used to address alike by the tender names of little children. It is said, in some early histories, that he spent his last days at Ephesus, where he died; and that, when he was too old to walk, he was carried to the place of worship in the arms of some of the disciples. He could then only speak a few words very feebly; and these words always were, "Little children, love one another."

The Second Epistle of John is not called "general." It was written to a pious lady. The scope of it is to urge this pious lady to hold fast her Christian faith, to avoid error, and to love God and those who loved him.

The Third Epistle of John was to a particular person also. His name was Gaius or Caius, and, most likely, the same mentioned by the apostle Paul for his kindness in receiving, and lodging, and entertaining good people. See the sixteenth chapter of Romans, near the end. In this Epistle, John speaks of one "Diotrephes," who was a very haughty man, which was not a proper mark of a Christian, and of one "Demetrius," who had a good report of all men, as every Christian should have, as far as respects his life, temper, and behavior. The former he mentions, that Gaius may not imitate him; and the latter he holds up as an excellent example. We should always imitate the example of the truly wise and good.

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